



*Thos. Hewitt Key*

# PHILO-SOCRATES.

... of Papers, wherein subjects are investigated which, there is reason  
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## PART VII.—Among the Hindoos.

BY WILLIAM ELLIS,

AUTHOR OF "RELIGION IN COMMON LIFE," "OUTLINES OF SOCIAL ECONOMY,"  
ETC. ETC.

LONDON:  
SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.

M.DCCC.LXIII.

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## CONTENTS.



	PAGE
ON MISSIONARIES .....	1
ON LAWS, MORALS, AND RELIGION .....	28
ON PLEASURES AND PAINS .....	56
ON GOOD AND EVIL .....	82
ON RIGHT AND WRONG .....	105
ON THE PAST, THE PRESENT, AND THE FUTURE .....	133



# PHILO-SOCRATES.

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## AMONG THE HINDOOS.

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### ON MISSIONARIES.

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*H.* WE were rejoiced to hear that you intended to visit Hindustan, and we lose no time in coming to offer you our welcome. You cannot conceive how greatly disappointed we are that no one of the European adventurers who have as yet come out here seems disposed or able to help us to a knowledge of what it is that gives you the wonderful superiority over us, which we cannot but feel and acknowledge.

*P.* You are not just to my countrymen. You are overlooking one great fact—that besides the adventurers, as you call them, who have quitted England in search of fortune and fame, numerous individuals have accompanied them with no other object than to impart some of their knowledge to you, and to do you good in other respects.

*H.* We have not overlooked them. Indeed, they have acted towards us in a way to make it impossible for us to forget them. They have insulted us unsparingly, and taught us nothing.

*P.* I could almost fancy that some unfounded suspicions, some want of tact, or some error of judgment, either on their side or on yours, has led you to misapprehend their intentions towards you. From the few words which you have dropped, I should not be surprised to learn that you had shown some aversion or disrespect for their well-meant offers of instruction.

*H.* It so happens that we first incurred their displeasure by seeking explanations when we could not follow their instructions. They seemed to be taken by surprise at our questions, as if expecting us to adopt what they dictated, not to learn as well as we could what they taught. There must be some misapprehension between us. It may be, when they express a desire for our conversion, that they have no thought of instructing us.

*P.* And if by conversion they mean something more than instruction, if they wish to draw you away from the thoughts and lines of conduct which lead to misery, not only in this life, but in a life to come, ought you not to be grateful for their efforts in your behalf, even if unsuccessful?

*H.* The missionaries to whom you refer may be very well-intentioned people, and so far we ought to be thankful for their good dispositions towards us. But they prove—superior to us, as the Europeans unquestionably are—that there are grades of intelligence among them, as well as among ourselves. We have no thought of confounding your adventurers with your missionaries. The former are, at least, capable, to the extent of attaining the objects at which they aim—fortune and fame; the latter meet with no success, for they do not make converts.

*P.* I fear you are destined to be as much disappointed with me as with the missionaries, for I shall certainly make no converts. It is not even my practice to attempt to make any. I have come here with the desire of following up the course of inquiry and study which I have been prosecuting in Europe; and in return for any assistance with which you will favour me, I shall be delighted, if able, to put you in the way

of obtaining any information which you feel yourselves to be in want of.

*H.* The missionaries have never acted towards us in this spirit. They seem scarcely to have a thought beyond denouncing our religion, which they characterize as superstition, and not of God, and insisting upon our adoption of their religion, which they proclaim to be a direct revelation from God.

*P.* Do not be unjust to them, even if they fail to convince you. Fancy yourselves in their place. They are fully persuaded of the truth of their own religion, and that belief in it is indispensable for salvation from torments without end. All other religions must, therefore, be in their eyes dangerous superstitions, debarring those who hold by them from salvation. How, then, can the missionaries, as conscientious and earnest men, do otherwise than exert themselves to the utmost, with prayers and exhortations, by appeals to your fears and your hopes, to bring you over to their own religion, and to tear you from the superstitions by which you have been enslaved? In addition to the substantial benefits which they are striving to confer upon you, it may be said that they hope to secure some for themselves. It would but be in conformity with their religious belief that their own eternal happiness might be risked were they to be guilty of lukewarmness or indolence in converting you to Christianity.

*H.* It has been our wish to be just to them. Giving them full credit for their conscientiousness and earnestness, we must bear in mind that these qualities ought to be accompanied by others to make effective missionaries. Ignorant men may be earnest and conscientious; and the world is filled with memorials of the mischief that has been done by such men. While we resist we cannot blame them; for they are unconscious of the strifes, estrangements, and vindictive feelings which their misdirected zeal is stirring up. But we are told that they were selected and appointed by superiors in your country. Is it possible that a people so powerful and intelligent as the

English undoubtedly are, can be so wanting in sagacity as to choose their missionaries so badly? Or is it that the missionary materials at their disposal are so indifferent as to compel them to send forth missionaries remarkable principally for their success in stirring up strife between two races, which, but for them, might gradually harmonize?

*P.* You and the missionaries are judging of society, and of human affairs in general, from different points of view. You are both agreed that the European nations are, with few exceptions, greatly in advance of the Asiatic. The missionaries attribute this superiority to the influence of the Christian religion; while to you this explanation seems to be unsatisfactory. You are both of one mind that the people of this vast country live in greater comfort and security than their forefathers did. The missionaries attribute a large part of this happy change to their labours. You contend that it is attributable to other causes, which but for the interference of the missionaries would have produced still happier effects. You would, perhaps, find it rather difficult to prove what you assert with so much confidence, and, I must add, with no little bitterness.

*H.* With all your calmness and self-possession, I think you would excuse some outburst of temper, even in the like of yourself, if you had witnessed as we have, how the common sense of the more intelligent of our countrymen has been insulted, and the feelings of the less intelligent outraged.

*P.* If it be really true that the missionaries have shocked your common sense, would it not be wiser to turn aside with pity rather than to resent with anger?

*H.* Perhaps it would. But their onslaughts upon what they are pleased to call our superstitions, are made in public, surrounded as we are by the uninstructed masses of our countrymen, jealously watchful of the slightest deviations that we might make from the ceremonials and observances as recognized to be enjoined in our sacred books. They actually force



upon us the necessity of accepting and defending much that, individually, we are disposed to surrender.

*P.* I do not question that the missionaries may have given you some cause for feelings of anger and annoyance. It is sad that coming here as they do, intent upon supplanting one religion by another and a better, they should place difficulties in the way of you, and of the few who agree with you, who are anxious to purify your own from some of the grosser superstitions attached to it.

*H.* We should like to satisfy you that we are not complaining without reason. The missionaries treat our Brahmins with marked disrespect. You are aware that the divisions among us into castes are being gradually broken down, and that the tendency among the more intelligent of us is to judge of one another according to the acts, the conduct, and the deportment of each. Nevertheless, the Brahmins are still looked up to with particular reverence, irrespectively of their conduct, by the masses ; and to them is reserved the exclusive privilege of teaching the Vedas. Dirt and ignorance, dishonesty and cruelty, do not suffice to reduce them in the eyes of many to the level of a lower caste ; and, in the same eyes, no respectability of conduct will suffice to raise men of a lower caste to the level of a Brahmin.

*P.* Surely you would not have the missionaries overlook the real distinctions between good and bad men in order to show their respect for the artificial distinctions of castes.

*H.* What we complain of is, not their preference of good to bad men, in whatever caste they may be found, but their ostentatious disregard for superiority of caste. It is surprising they cannot see that, while the superstitions of the multitude lead them to look upon Brahmins with reverence, the marked disrespect of them by strangers is more likely than otherwise to strengthen their hold upon the multitude, and to add to the difficulties of those who, like ourselves, are wishing to judge and to bring others to judge of conduct according to its tendency to promote or prevent well-being.

*P.* It would be a misapprehension on your part to conclude that the missionaries disregard superiority of caste. They have, if not the equivalent of it, a substitute for it, in gradations of rank. Their own position in society at home, and still more, the position of those who give them their mission, is as much one of pre-eminence as that of the Brahmins with you. They were not born to this position, however. They had to earn it.

*H.* After what you have stated, we will not question that the missionaries have earned the position which they hold. But the qualifications which entitle them to it are unknown to us. They certainly are not those of kindly and conciliatory manners which allay suspicion and inspire confidence and attachment, so as to give time for persuasion and reason to do their work; nor those powers of exposition which place in bold relief the distinctions between a superstitious faith and a Divine revelation.

*P.* Would it be very uncharitable to suspect that the want of success which has attended missionary labours may be partly attributed to the unteachableness of your countrymen, and not be wholly owing to deficiency of teaching power among the missionaries?

*H.* Our notion of the qualifications needful in an effective teacher, place him where you will, is knowledge of what he has to teach, familiar acquaintance with the forms of ignorance—the prejudices and superstitions prevailing among the people to be taught, and aptitude in so presenting his knowledge to them, as that the old superstitions will disappear before the light of the new truths learned and understood. Your missionaries are not gifted with these qualifications. They attempt to drive out our superstitions, and their attempts are resented. If they attempt to teach new truths, their attempts are so injudicious that their new truths appear like new superstitions. And it is quite in keeping with universal experience that new superstitions assume the form of truths less readily than old ones.

*P.* I am far from denying the truth of much that you charge against our missionaries. But I think you greatly underrate the difficulties opposed to them by the superstitions of your countrymen.

*H.* You have agreed with us that intelligent teachers would apply themselves to dispel superstitions without unnecessarily shocking or irritating the superstitious. You shall judge how far your missionaries have given proofs of their intelligence. Some of them were present with us at a meeting where one of the most learned and venerated of our Brahmins was engaged to read and expound a lesson from the Vedas. The lesson was upon one of the fundamental doctrines of our faith—the Holy Triad. The Brahmin expounded the high attributes of our three gods—Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva—Brahma, the creator; Vishnu, the preserver; and Siva, the destroyer. While expatiating upon the powers and significance of each of these divisions of the godhead, he cautioned his hearers against falling into the dangerous error of believing in a plurality of gods; and, keeping to the text of the sacred writing, which adapts itself to the weakness of the most ignorant of the faithful, he explained that their prayers were to be addressed, not to three gods, but to one god, to one body with three heads, each head turning its ears to the suppliant, according as his wants called for the intervention of the creator, the preserver, or the destroyer. We could scarcely restrain our indignation at the behaviour of the missionaries, so little pains did they take to conceal their contempt and disgust for what they were pleased to call the mixture of superstition and blasphemy to which they were listening.

*P.* Are you quite sure that you do not exaggerate the indiscretion and bad taste of the missionaries? Could they possibly avoid giving offence while striving to correct, however tenderly, errors of belief? May it not be that, unknown to yourselves, you are more vexed because your belief has been called in question while you were unable to justify it, than because some sacred truth was treated with disrespect?

*H.* You do not seem fully to realise the peculiarity of our position. We conform to the religion in which we were brought up; but we are not blind to many of the deformities and absurdities that have been interwoven with it. While we are striving to purify it, and gently to gain over the more teachable of our friends and neighbours, your missionaries come among us, and would destroy all our influence for good, if we did not make common cause with our countrymen in repelling the fierce and foul aspersions made upon our religion.

*P.* Is truth to be suppressed or trifled with? Is superstition to be countenanced, and religion to be made subservient to convenience?

*H.* We answer "No" to each of these questions. Conceding that your missionaries and missionary-makers are possessed of the true religion, and that their object is to spread it, their success is inconceivable in the way that they set about their work.

*P.* Their way must be bad, indeed, if, with truth on their side and a desire to promulgate it, they do not succeed. As you are so decided in your condemnation of what they are doing, you may have some thoughts as to how they might do better?

*H.* One thing is plain to us. They should have begun by making themselves acceptable, not odious, to the people whom they would convert. Their success depends upon being listened to; and the people turn away their ears.

*P.* Their case, as you represent it, is hard indeed. Their purpose is to preach the truth; but to preach the truth will make them obnoxious. Would you have them begin their mission of promulgating truth by countenancing, if not by actually inculcating, untruths?

*H.* You seem to deny that there is an art of conciliating the ignorant and mistaken, without countenancing what is false. We do not see why the better informed among mankind should be shut out from the most efficacious means of imparting their knowledge to others.



*P.* I should like to be a little better acquainted with your thoughts, both as to what missionary practice is, and as to what it ought to be.

*H.* As to what missionary practice is, we look upon it as a great failure. Your missionaries stumble at the very threshold. They fail at the very outset. They cannot gain attention. Few will even give them a hearing. So far from being able to draw over the reluctant, they actually drive off those who, like ourselves, are well disposed to learn from anybody capable of teaching.

*P.* It is easier to blame them than to show how any teachers can make themselves acceptable to those whose superstitions must be exposed in order to be corrected.

*H.* We do not pretend that their work is easy, nor that we are competent to show how it ought to be executed. But where men supposed to be intelligent and capable who have been specially appointed, first, to organize the means for executing a work and then to apply them, break down at the first step, surely we must recognize that they under-estimated the difficulties of their work, or were incapable of overcoming them.

*P.* As I wish to learn from you whether you think any missionary efforts could possibly succeed among your countrymen, and how, I will say nothing more in extenuation of the faults, as you consider them, of tact and judgment in our missionaries, but beg of you to explain to me how you conceive they might have steered clear of giving offence, and thus of destroying all chances of being listened to.

*H.* You will, perhaps, smile at our simplicity. But it appears to us that most religions, those, at all events, based upon the Vedas, the Koran, and the Bible, agree in some respects, however widely they may differ in others; and that it should be the effort of a missionary to take his stand upon the common ground of agreement, and, by means of his superior intelligence, gradually to win over others to the perception of what alone is reconcilable, and what must be irreconcilable, with the doctrines believed in common.

*P.* Are you speaking from experience of the efficacy of this method of effecting conversions? Have you ever been moved to bring others over to your belief by these means?

*H.* We regret to say that we have not yet been able to settle our own belief. We have sought in vain, in the Koran and the Bible, for that satisfaction which we have ceased to find in the Vedas. But if there be men more fortunate than ourselves, who have settled their own belief, and have acquired the capacity of making the justification of it which is satisfactory to themselves satisfactory to others, they ought to be able to bring over many of those who still differ with them, taking their departure from that ground on which they stand in common.

*P.* Is it fair to assume that their failure to make acceptable to others what has appeared incontrovertible to themselves must be owing to their own incapacity? May there not be ignorance so dense, and superstition so fierce, that the most consummate ability and the most untiring zeal would be directed against them in vain?

*H.* We would not be so uncandid as to leave out of consideration the causes of failure to which you refer. But as your missionaries have opportunities of bringing their influence to bear upon young and old, lettered and unlettered, their all but universal want of success could not be the effect of these causes exclusively. Besides, we cannot but notice the mistrust and aversion which they have inspired, by their ostentatiously disrespectful bearing towards what they call our superstitions, but what our people believe to be religious observances.

*P.* And yet I think you would hardly have them make demonstrations of respect towards objects and ceremonies which they must disapprove or even abominate.

*H.* We would avoid tampering with truth. We would also avoid so conducting ourselves as to set against us those to whom we would make truth known. If we were to proceed as missionaries among idolators, we would neither fall down and worship their idols, nor incline them to expel or to

massacre us, by breaking their idols. We ought either to stay at home, or go forth determined to use our utmost endeavours, in our teaching, our deportment, and our kindly intercourse, to lead them first to abandon and then to destroy their mock deities.

*P.* And do our missionaries break the idols of your countrymen?

*H.* They do worse; since to break an idol is far less galling than to laugh to scorn a religious doctrine which has obtained a strong hold over the affections.

*P.* I regret to see that your feelings have been so deeply wounded. You must not accuse the missionaries of having done this intentionally, nor suffer yourselves to be set against the acceptance of new truths, or the correction of cherished errors, by the conduct of others, whether you misconceive it, or whether it really be injudicious.

*H.* We hope nobody will ever be able to reduce us to so pitiable a state; but we think we can satisfy you that our soreness is not altogether inexcusable. You know the tenacity with which we cling to the expectation of having our souls, at some future time, united to the Divine spirit. Our comfort in affliction, and our support under trial, is the hope of an early deliverance from animal existence, so as to be absorbed into the Divine essence. It is given to no one to pass direct into this longed-for union. Each man's soul must, according to our belief, pass through transmigrations, the frequency and duration of which are only to be lessened by an unremitting study of the Vedas, and a performance of penances. Surely the avowal of such a belief, the reverence for the Vedas, and the endurance of mortification, ought not to be treated with contumely.

*P.* Are you quite sure that you do not misconstrue the conduct of the missionaries? Do you not unconsciously take umbrage because your expectation that your souls are destined to be united to the Divine spirit appears to them absurd and irreverent, and that intermediate transmigration through

animals incapable of bearing testimony to the existence of souls within them, is looked upon as an invention of the wildest fancy?

*H.* They seem to us less intent on reasoning us out of our belief than to condemn it without listening to our vindication of it. They proceed forthwith to insist upon our accepting on trust from them a creed less reconcilable with reason than our own. They tell us that they believe in eternal life after the soul has quitted the flesh, that this future life will be one of eternal happiness or eternal misery, according as men conduct themselves in the flesh; and then they appeal to our fears by telling us that, unless we believe as they do, we are foredoomed to an eternity of misery. Our encouragement is not very great, even if we were to abandon our own belief and to take to theirs, for according to them, of true believers, though many be called, few are chosen. You cannot feel surprised that the result of such ministrations as theirs is to make us cling to our own more comfortable belief.

*P.* The first question to be decided is, which set of doctrines is true, not which is most comfortable. Subsequent examination may show that the true will always be found the most comfortable.

*H.* We admit our inability to defend the belief generally prevalent among us in all its parts. But, as a whole, it appears to be less self-contradictory than the one preached by your missionaries. They tell us of the omnipotence and infinite goodness and wisdom of their God, and, in the same breath, ask us to believe either that he permitted or could not prevent the suffering of an eternity of torment by the larger portion of the human race.

*P.* Their answer to this difficulty may not satisfy you; but I give it to you as I have heard it. They say, that to raise such an objection is to enter upon a course which, if not forbidden by something higher than reason, would subvert all religion.

*H.* We are not aware of anything higher than reason



wherewith to investigate and determine the relative claims to our attention and respect of different religions. We know of nothing but reason that is available for the purpose. When discussing and inquiring with fellow-mortals, we can only use our reason. Faith, humility, reverence, submission, we exercise in our communion with the Deity. And it would indicate a very imperfect appreciation of the Divine attributes were we to exercise these feelings towards Him regardless of reason. Now, reason tells us that the missionaries' notions concerning God are inadmissible as well as horrible. Fortunately, they are so discordant and contradictory, that they are likely to be put up with by few except those into whom they were driven and riveted before the dawn of reason. The missionaries acknowledge the infinite power of God, and then represent Him as incapable of saving the beings of his creation from eternity of torment. They acknowledge his infinite goodness, and then represent Him as countenancing and commanding acts of cruelty and atrocity which would disgrace a savage. They acknowledge his omniscience, and then represent Him as surprised, disappointed, and offended at the effects of his own performances. And, lastly, they represent Him as shocked at the thought of the interminable torment in store for all mankind, and desirous of somewhat circumscribing it, but unable to accomplish his purpose by any other means than by sending a Son begotten by the Holy Ghost; and born of a Virgin, to suffer death upon a cross, and thereby take upon Himself the sins of the world; leaving, nevertheless, the larger portion of mankind to eternity of suffering, as if his Son had not been offered up a propitiatory sacrifice.

*P.* Your reverence for your own God may be unbounded, but you pay very little to the God of the Christians.

*H.* We trust that we have risen sufficiently above the superstitions of our forefathers to be able to acknowledge one God, the God alike of Hindoo, Mahomedan, Christian, and Heathen. Our shortcomings in reverence for a God as painted

by your missionaries is a necessary consequence of the fulness of our reverence for the great God of the universe. Our reverence for Him makes it impossible for us to worship at the shrine of an idol, whether of wood, stone, or metal, or the reflected image of an ignorant, superstitious, and savage people.

*P.* If I do not mistake your meaning, you turn aside from God, as He has been handed down to you by your forefathers, and you refuse to accept Him as offered to you by the missionaries.

*H.* And also that still later invention, the god which the Mahomedans have tried to impose upon us.

*P.* Do you aspire to be the founders of a new religion? You are dissatisfied with the Vedas; and you reject the Koran and the Bible.

*H.* Our pretensions are less ambitious. We seek for light and truth. We would gratefully accept them if offered to us by others; and will gladly assist others to participate in our success, if we should be so far blessed in our researches as to find them. Not the earth only, but the universe, is the Lord's, and all that is therein. And as with the universe, so with the Master of the universe; it will not do for us to accept the description of either as handed down from olden times—from times when fable and superstition were mistaken for history and science, even more than they are now.

*P.* It is not surprising that, in your frame of mind, you should feel little attraction towards our missionaries. You should, nevertheless, bear in mind that they belong to a people who, according to your own admission, have given proofs of their undoubted superiority over the eastern nations. This superiority must be traceable to some causes, the discovery of which ought to interest you greatly. You must then, at least, suspect that you may learn something from them; and you say that you are desirous of learning. Do you imagine that people who are desirous of learning will always fall in with those who, having the knowledge, are qualified to impart

it? And if not, what is the course recommended to them by common sense? To complain of, and turn away from, their teachers; or to apply all their powers of learning to compensate for the lack of teaching power in those who have the knowledge which is sought for?

*H.* People eager to learn should, we admit, not be sparing in their efforts to extract the knowledge of which they feel the want from those who have it, whatever may be their incapacity, or even their unwillingness, to impart it. We hope we are not wanting in this earnestness of purpose. But your missionaries tantalize us. They will neither answer our questions, nor explain what is unintelligible to us. They are ready enough to exhort, to denounce, to insist. It seems as if they could not teach; and they will not give us a chance of supplying their want of teaching power by our own efforts to learn from them.

*P.* You may have learned more than you take credit for. Do you not say that you have tacitly, if not overtly, thrown off many of the traditional fables that have been handed down as portions of your religion?

*H.* But we are not satisfied to be incessantly throwing off. We shudder at the thought of religious nakedness, and long to obtain substitutes for the shreds and tatters which we have been compelled to part with. Your missionaries cannot complain of any want of willingness on our parts to receive, or even to work and feel grateful for any garments capable of screening us from religious nakedness.

*P.* And do they offer you no garments?

*H.* Their stores, so far as they have opened them to us, are full of old and worn-out clothes, some so dirty that we could not venture to touch them. Among those that we tried on, we did not find any that would fit.

*P.* The prospect of nakedness which disturbs you does not, apparently, arise so much from any backwardness in supplying you with clothes, as from your repugnance to accept what is offered to you.

*H.* To drop metaphor, we think you will agree with us that, however great our anxiety to be provided with a body of religious doctrine, it does not depend upon our wills whether we are to be suited or not. We are compelled, we might almost say against our wills, certainly with reluctance, to abandon a belief the absurdities in which were imposed upon us, but which had been interwoven with our very being; and we cannot accept another in its place, the absurdities of which are no less gross, presented as they are for the first time when our judgments have attained some degree of maturity.

*P.* Are you quite confident that in matters of religion, as in other matters introduced to your notice for the first time, there may not be difficulties, the conquering of which will require some little faith in your teachers, as well as much patient application from yourselves? Did not the achievements of our engineers and electricians at first appear quite as inexplicable as what you now call our religious absurdities?

*H.* They did. But your engineers and electricians have condescended to teach us, to answer our inquiries, and to put us in the way of overcoming our difficulties, and of participating in their knowledge, and enjoying its fruits. They have asked us to accept nothing from them on trust; whereas your missionaries, so far as we can judge, expect us to trust them implicitly. We would not intentionally make them responsible for the consequences of our own dulness. We feel that we are anxious to learn what they profess to know, and to bestow unremitting attention upon anybody who will instruct us. But we cannot prevail upon them to teach us, or to help us over difficulties which their greater strength has enabled them either to escape or to overcome.

*P.* I readily enter into your feelings of disappointment. But you must bear in mind that if you do not obtain the explanations of which you are in search, you at all events learn where and how you are thwarted in your attempts to obtain them.

*H.* As we cannot suppose that your missionaries are un-



willing to teach, we are driven to suspect that they are incompetent. The impression they have left upon us is that they have never conceived the possibility of such doubts as we express, and that accordingly they have not turned their attention to the means of removing them. Having accepted their own articles of faith on trust, they are quite at a loss how to recommend them to persons who, like ourselves, are rejecting some of their own, because seen to be contrary to reason, and can only receive others which are conformable to reason.

*P.* You could not have formed these opinions of the missionaries till after you had been foiled in your attempts to get from them the reasons for the faith which is in them, and which they wished to see adopted by you. But you must excuse me for reminding you that your disappointment may as well be owing to your want of capacity for apprehending as to theirs for explaining.

*H.* Their manner of meeting our inquiries did not, certainly, indicate a very exalted opinion of our capacities. You would scarcely believe that once, in answer to some observations of ours upon the comparative claims to our belief of the Vedas, the Bible, and the Koran, they endeavoured to put us off with the declaration that, in their opinion, the rapid spread of Christianity was of itself unimpeachable evidence of its divine origin.

*P.* Surely, if you do not entirely agree with them, you will admit that its rapid diffusion among the people in so many parts of the earth is one of the most remarkable occurrences in history!

*H.* The distance is great between an occurrence that is remarkable and one that establishes the divine origin of a religion, which its votaries cannot otherwise maintain successfully against competing religions. Christianity is said to have been introduced into these regions within less than one hundred years after the birth of Christ; and the Mahomedans did not invade Hindustan till nine hundred years afterwards.

The number of Mahomedans is small in comparison with our whole population, and that of the Christians is trifling compared with the Mahomedan population. It is clear, therefore, whatever other grounds there may be for preferring the Christian religion, it is not to be recommended on account of the rapidity with which it supplants other religions, or of the tenacity with which it retains the hold that it has once acquired. For, if we are not misinformed, Mahomedans principally inhabit the region in which Christianity first flourished—the very region in which Christ was born.

*P.* Possibly the missionaries who introduced this somewhat irrelevant matter in their eagerness to make a favourable impression upon you, intended to dwell less upon the antiquity of the Christian religion, and upon the actual numerical superiority of the believers in it, than upon its evidently growing strength in regard to numbers through the progressively increasing intelligence of those who profess the Christian religion, as we see them in modern times.

*H.* The growth of Christianity in modern times, of which your missionaries boast, seems to us to have been brought about, not by converting the people of other religions, but by destroying them. The idolatrous savages of America were not christianized by their Christian conquerors; they were swept from the face of the earth as by a pestilence, and their dwelling-places were occupied by their Christian destroyers. Christianity has spread in Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, by the same means, except so far as the Christians may be said to have taken possession of unoccupied lands, in which, of course, Christians begat Christians, and Christian families multiplied and replenished the earth.

*P.* Does not the continuous spread of one religion in modern times, confined, as far as we know, to Christianity, indicate superiority?

*H.* It may. If we were to accept it as a proof that Christians are superior to Hindoos and Mahomedans, we should be a long

way from admitting it as a proof of the truth of what you call the Christian religion. To admit that Christians are less superstitious, less indolent, and less barbarous than Hindoos and Mahomedans, is not to admit that their religion is free from superstition, or is not in the main a compound of superstitions, or that their so-called civilization is much more than a slight advance upon surrounding barbarism towards the more perfect civilization of the future.

*P.* Let all this be as it may. One thing is clear ; you would be pursuing a mistaken course in your search for a religion, if you allowed your acceptance of one out of the many introduced to you to depend, not upon its intrinsic merits, but upon the craft of the clever, or the awkwardness of the silly folk who might recommend it. I think you will agree with me, however, that, although the Christians in this country are greatly outnumbered by the Mahomedans, and still more by the Hindoos, they have proved themselves the superior race.

*H.* But their superiority may be in spite, not in consequence, of their religion. We are almost inclined to attribute part of their superiority to the facility with which they direct their conduct, irrespectively of the professions of religion which they make with their lips and print in their books. We have no desire to reject Christianity, on account of the follies of the missionaries, or the mal-practices of many of those who call themselves Christians. We wish to judge it upon its merits, whatever they may be, for the missionaries have not yet made known to us what they are.

*P.* As some excuse for them, I must again remind you that the cause of your continuing unacquainted with the merits of a new religion may be in your inability to learn, as well as in the unskilfulness of your teachers. Without the most distant thought of underrating your general intelligence, it is but justice to those who have failed in imparting their belief to you, to consider that one consequence of holding a set of opinions unsupported by evidence is to be rendered

incapable of appreciating the evidence on which really sound opinions are based.

*H.* We cannot lay claim to much expertness in sifting truth from error, or in judging what evidence ought to force us to yield our belief, or when we ought to withhold, or suspend, or retract it. But we can hardly fancy that we have our minds preoccupied with unfounded beliefs or superstitions. We are rather suffering from a vacuum or want of belief. The awakening of our reasoning faculties, and the wider range for their exercise, which we owe to our intercourse with your countrymen, have made it impossible for us to hold by many of the traditions inherited from our fathers, and we are really anxious to supply their place with something better. You need not imagine that we are set against any instruction which your missionaries can give us, or that we glory in our incredulity. We deplore it. We are craving for a belief that will not offend our reasons. Our joy at your coming is because the missionaries have disappointed us.

*P.* Has your disappointment in the missionaries been caused by their refusing to supply you with a belief, or by their pressing upon you one that you were unwilling to accept?

*H.* By their pressing upon us one, not that we were unwilling, but which we were unable to accept.

*P.* And can you recognize to yourselves why you were unable to accept?

*H.* Because our reasons recoiled. Because, as it seemed to us, we were called upon to accept absurdities and contradictions more glaring than those which we had abandoned.

*P.* Are you quite at your ease in thus relying upon your reason? Has it not misled you once? May it not mislead you again?

*H.* The missionaries have tried to daunt and confound us with their reflections upon the fallibility of human reason. They bade us beware of the "pride of reason." To us there seems more to be feared from the "arrogance of unreason." One of your poets has said, "Fools rush in where angels fear



to tread." We share in the fears of the angels. We hold back ; we don't rush in ; and we recognize that it is our reason which prevents us. The missionaries, however, tell us that man's reason is not God's reason, nor man's ways God's ways. But then which is God's reason, and which are God's ways ? The missionaries cannot satisfy us. They can do no more than give us their own interpretations, which are not God's reason and ways, but missionary's.

*P.* Are you content, then, to rely upon your own reasoning faculties ?

*H.* Compelled rather than content. Our reasoning faculties advised us to get quit of our former imagination of a god with one body and three heads, and also to keep clear of one which would represent Him as condemning the whole human race, with rare exceptions, to an eternity of torment. They may lead us to turn our backs upon truths, and to receive new errors and superstitions as truths. The only safeguard that we can think of against these dangers is, not to distrust, but to cultivate and exercise our reasoning faculties, so as to raise them to the capacity of distinguishing between truth and error, wisdom and folly, and of recognizing and appreciating God's reason and ways, and of making them as nearly as possible our own.

*P.* And the missionaries have failed to inspire you with the feeling that they are much nearer to an acquaintance with God's reason and ways than you are.

*H.* Judging by what they persist in attempting to pass off as his reason and ways, we should say that they are much farther from them. We will give you a few examples to enable you to decide whether we are doing them injustice, or whether we deserve to be condemned as intractable and unteachable scholars. To begin with the creation of the world, that sublime mystery which must ever strike reflecting men with awe and reverence—we incurred their displeasure, because we could not but express our astonishment at, and disbelief of, the strange story which they evidently expected us to adopt unquestioned. The origin of their sabbath is

quite in keeping with the origin of their creation. The seventh day was ordained as a day of rest for man, because God, having completed the work of creation in six days, himself rested on the seventh.

*P.* Do you profess to be able to give a better account of creation?

*H.* We could scarcely give one more full of contradictions, or more abounding in proofs of the ignorance and presumption of its inventor. We can take advantage of our knowledge of our own ignorance by maintaining a reverential silence upon subjects which transcend our limited powers.

*P.* People have not been, nor indeed are they now, content to remain uninformed concerning the origin of things.

*H.* We do not say that we are content; but we rather resign ourselves to put up with things unexplained, than to accept pretences of explanation. The narrative of creation, as given to us by the missionaries, can only be valued as evidence of the ignorance of the people to whom it was satisfactory.

*P.* You will not refuse to acknowledge, if mankind have derived no other benefit from this record of creation, that at least they owe to it the institution of a sabbath?

*H.* To say that we *owe* the institution of a sabbath to a narrative of the progress and completion of creation, is to say that we know a day of rest to be a good. For we do not talk of being indebted for an evil. But if men had discovered a day of rest to be desirable, would they not have provided it as they have provided food, and clothing, and shelter, and medicine, without the assistance of any fabulous narrative of creation, but by the exercise of those reasoning faculties vouchsafed to them by their Creator?

*P.* You acknowledge the Creator, although you repudiate the creation.

*H.* You are not dealing fairly with us. We neither repudiate the creation nor the Creator. We certainly reject the missionaries' account of the creation; and we must also

decline to accept their description of the attributes of the Creator. Their narrative, in our eyes, is little more than an uninterrupted succession of desecrations of the Supreme Being, whom they degrade to the level of an ignorant despot ruling over an ignorant people.

*P.* Must it not be admitted, that the people for whose instruction and guidance this revealed account of creation was supposed to be needful, were ignorant, and only to be governed in accordance with their ignorance, and that injunctions from God not made to resemble those of a despot would never have been received and obeyed?

*H.* We trust that we are not criticizing and judging without some of the knowledge of which the people of those times could not have been possessed. Because they were ignorant and unruly, that can be no reason why God, as wise and good and powerful in the beginning as he is now, and will be in the end, should be represented almost as weak and foolish as man in an early stage of his development.

*P.* If you have spoken in these terms to the missionaries, I am not surprised at their having taken offence.

*H.* The terms in which they have spoken of the narrative of creation accepted among us are quite as plain. The difference between them and us is, that we, having emancipated ourselves from many of our own superstitions, are not to be imposed upon by superstitions much more gross.

*P.* I am not disposed to enter upon an examination of the superstitions which you say you have outgrown, but must it not be some lingering fondness for them which makes you think them to be less gross than the narratives of our missionaries?

*H.* In confirmation of our views, we will, with your leave, repeat to you the account of God's sixth day's work, as read to us by the missionaries :—

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over

all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he man; male and female created he them.

“And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it : and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

“And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed ; to you it shall be for meat.

“And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat : and it was so.

“And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, *it was* very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.”—(Genesis, ch. i., v. 26—31.)

Would any rational person expect, after listening to this narrative of creation, to be called upon to believe that before the lapse of many years “it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart” ?—(Genesis, ch. vi., v. 6.)

*P.* You must not allow the ill-directed zeal of our missionaries to inflict an injury upon you, or an injustice upon us. Do not let them prejudice you against truth, nor make you suspect that all their countrymen share in their delusions, because they have attempted to persuade you that an allegory adapted to the level of a race of savages was meant to be binding upon the more enlightened generations to follow.

*H.* We will endeavour to avoid both dangers. But we are lost in amazement that there can be countrymen of yours—men, too, purposely selected to instruct us—so bowed down by superstition, and so insensible to the incoherencies and contradictions of their own utterances.



*P.* You know how various and contradictory are the so-called religious tenets which overspread the world, and how minute are the subdivisions of incoherent interpretations of the same religious phraseology. Into the midst of all these, light and order are gradually penetrating with each advance of intelligence—with each step gained by man in knowledge of his own nature and of the properties of matter, and in ability to regulate his movements in harmony with both. Which class of men, think you, is most likely first to feel the influence of these advances of knowledge—those whose education has been carefully conducted with a view to instil into them the knowledge of all prevailing superstitions, and to constitute these superstitions, in their minds, articles of religious belief which it would be sinful not only to surrender but to consent to examine, as if they could possibly require rectification; or those who, less carefully educated after that fashion, and less trammelled with prejudices in favour of traditional superstitions, catch an occasional ray from the new lights shining around them?

*H.* The latter, of course.

*P.* Well, our statesmen, our legislators, our judges, our physicians, our engineers, our navigators, our warriors, and our merchants, come from the latter class, and our missionaries from the former.

*H.* Even with the explanation which you give of the extraordinary way of conducting missionary education, it is strange to us, how one nation can send forth the two varieties of men of which your engineers and missionaries are types. The former have made every region of the earth accessible to us. The latter have assisted at the breaking up of the road by which we had hoped to reach heaven, and have directed us to another, by them supposed to lead there, but which so obviously leads elsewhere that we decline to follow them on it.

*P.* The unfitness of the missionaries for their work is plain enough. Harshness, or even severity of censure, should be avoided. That may be reserved for intentional wrong-doers.

*H.* We have done our utmost not to show any want of consideration for the missionaries in their presence or in public, because we give them credit for good intentions, which, however, in our literature, as well as in yours, are said not to pave the road to heaven only. Closeted with you, we need not suppress our emotions at the idea that even the best of men, to say nothing of the miserable specimen of humanity who invented the fable, could have dared to represent God as having created man in his own image, seeing what man has so far been. We are termed scoffers and blasphemers for spurning this fable. We might earn a character for piety by admitting God, a spirit supremely good and wise, to be the like of man. A connected and intelligible narrative is the least we are entitled to demand of a writer professing to be inspired. He writes of times when no records were kept on earth. The only authority to which he can refer is inspiration—an authority which will only lend its support to a credible narrative. Your missionaries claim its support for the incredible. They say that God created man, male and female, and then, shortly afterwards, as if forgetful of what he had done, that he made woman over again. They degrade God not only to the level of man, but of a weak, foolish man; and, well-intentioned as they may be, we cannot excuse their stupidity. After God had made man, according to their account, which we almost shudder to repeat, he discovered that, in spite of his infinite wisdom, he had made a mistake. Instead of undoing his work and creating another man to his mind by the light of the experience in which he had been deficient at his first attempt, he, in spite of his infinite goodness, deprived the whole of this ill-fashioned man's posterity of the blessings prepared for them, and condemned them to a life of sorrow to end in death, if not in something worse. In the same strain they continue, not their description, but their caricature of a God. They represent him as angry at man's wickedness, which he was unable to prevent. He threatens to destroy man and every living creature in a deluge. Nevertheless, he

relents so far as to save one Noah and his family, because, in the words which they put into the Lord's mouth, "thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." When the deluge had subsided, and Noah and his family were saved, God blessed them. As if to expose God's utter want of discrimination of character, and the futility of all his projects, the very man thus selected to be saved and blessed introduces a new vice, more fruitful, perhaps, of crime and misery than any other—that of drunkenness.

*P.* Let us change this subject. I have heard enough of the missionaries.

*H.* We hope you will forgive us, if we appear to impute more blame to the missionaries than they deserve. We really have no feelings of animosity against them. But we were desirous to make known to you the reasons why we think your missionaries have made so little impression upon our countrymen. They shock the understandings of the more intelligent among us ; and they deride the superstitions and wound the feelings of the less intelligent.

## ON LAWS, MORALS, AND RELIGION.



*H.* ALTHOUGH we feel that no vague fears ought to deter us from searching for truth, from throwing off the old superstitions which have been instilled into us, and from lending a willing ear to strangers capable of teaching us better things, and disposed to give us the benefit of their instruction, we cannot but be conscious that our state of mind is very different from that which your missionaries looked for when they first thought of converting us to what they call Christianity. We should never have listened to them had we not already gone more than half way towards quitting the superstitions in which we had been brought up. And we find it impossible to receive the superstitions which, under the name of religion, they have laboured so zealously to impose upon us. In this state of mind, there is one difficulty which particularly disturbs us. Our laws and customs, as well as our ceremonial observances, are all so intermixed with our religion as to appear inseparable from it. Your missionaries tell us that they owe the blessings of their laws and customs to the Christian religion ; and we understand that the Mahomedans look upon the Koran as the source whence they draw all their laws and observances. In the course which we have been pursuing of late, the ground on which our laws and customs rest, seems to be slipping from under us. And if we cannot replace the Vedas with the Bible or Koran, we do not see what escape there is from the danger of being left without a foundation whereon to establish the laws and observances necessary for our government and guidance.



*P.* You have told me of your doubts and difficulties, and I may tell you that similar doubts and difficulties are not unknown to us in Europe. In addition to the people who find themselves unable to accept the Bible as the basis of their religion, there are many who do accept it, but hold that laws and rules of conduct ought to be quite independent of religion, which has nothing to do with them beyond confirming them by its authority and sanction.

*H.* You are opening a new field of thought to us. It never occurred to us that laws, customs, and observances could be based upon anything but religion. In the earliest periods of which we have any records, men were evidently incapable of making laws for themselves, and very little disposed to obey those made for them by others.

*P.* In those times, religion so called was made up of the most grovelling superstitions. Is it not possible that the men who first conceived the thought of holding sway over their fellows would attempt to strengthen their hold by pretending that the laws to which they claimed obedience were communicated to them from heaven?

*H.* That is possible. Accordingly, the question for us to solve is, which is the more probable, that men in a state of barbarism should have made laws, or that they should have received laws from a higher intelligence?

*P.* Would your answer to that question be at all decided by the character of the laws to which men were summoned to submit?

*H.* Of course, the more barbarous the laws, the more disposed should we be to assign to them a barbarous origin; the better adapted they were to raise people out of a state of barbarism, the more disposed should we be to attribute them to a higher intelligence.

*P.* Looking back like men with some little acquired knowledge and capacity, upon laws of a remote antiquity as recorded in sacred books, do we find that they have generally been retained unaltered to our own times?

*H.* That is a question difficult for us to answer, our country having been overrun by so many conquerors, each of whom has contrived to impose some of his own laws upon us.

*P.* I can assure you that in Europe our earliest laws, whencesoever derived, have been from time to time amended, added to, and repealed. We consider them better than they were formerly, although susceptible of further improvements still under discussion. Now, which of our laws do you think it would be more reverential to attribute to a divine origin, the later and better, or the earlier and more barbarous?

*H.* The later and better. It would, perhaps, be more sensible and reverential to attribute everything that is good in human laws to the Divinity, and all that is bad in them to man's ignorance and inexperience in interpreting and applying divine commands for the regulation of human conduct.

*P.* Would it not be yet more sensible and reverential to abstain from pretensions to an intuitive knowledge of the divine intentions, and from the practice of alternately expanding and contracting his power of control according to our own whims and caprices? Is not man as much the creation of God as any other portion of the universe? Are man's movements less under the control of God than the movements of the planets? Cannot we study both without trying to fix our numerous mistakes and misrepresentations upon Him, or boasting of our powers, as if they were not His powers working through us; filled with the thought that the duty devolved upon us is to improve and develop the powers with which we are gifted, and to exercise them in observing and applying all the other powers of nature placed at our disposal?

*H.* We stand corrected. There can be no excuse for the impertinent and presumptuous familiarity which pretends to an intuitive acquaintance with God's ways, the knowledge of which is clearly only to be obtained, if at all, through patient and persevering observation, experiment, and reflection.

*P.* In the conflicting laws of different nations, and in the alterations introduced from time to time into the laws of each

nation, is there any test available for determining which of them are most conformable to the divine will?

*H.* Each nation, we presume, would refer to its own inspired writings—to its own acknowledged revelation of the divine will.

*P.* And might it be implied that each nation when it modified its laws dissented from that interpretation of the divine will which justified the laws while yet unaltered?

*H.* It might.

*P.* And would it be safe to affirm that laws when modified were always improvements upon the originals, and therefore better exponents of God's will?

*H.* That would be to affirm man's infallibility—that he never was mistaken.

*P.* I gather from what I have heard that there are differences of interpretation among the more learned of the Brahmins about the significance of some of the expressions in the Vedas and in the laws of Menu, and that notoriously the Brahmins of the present day with their improved lights do not walk rigidly in the footprints of their predecessors. In Europe, as I have already stated, our laws have undergone so great a change that if the past and the present were equally drawn from the Bible, they would indicate great infirmity of judgment in some of the interpreters. Whatever view we take of the origin of human laws, we are compelled to fall back upon the exercise of human intelligence, whether for the purpose of improvising laws or of interpreting the divine revelation of them. Not shutting our eyes, then, to the actual position allotted to us of being destined to rely upon our own resources to make laws for ourselves or to interpret and apply the divine laws, how can we best set about the work assigned to us?

*H.* It would rather become us to put that question to you than to deceive ourselves into the belief that we are competent to answer it.

*P.* If you are not competent to answer it, you are quite as competent as anybody else to take part in the inquiries which

may lead to the information necessary to enable a satisfactory answer to be given. To pursue this inquiry with effect, it is desirable that we should have clearly before us what we feel we do know and our reasons for so feeling, so as to see clearly what it is that we do not know, but wish to learn. Now it seems to be taken for granted that we cannot do without laws, or that laws are indispensable. Is this so? or why are they indispensable?

*H.* It must be obvious to everybody that if there were not laws for the general protection, men could scarcely exist—could certainly be little more than a race of savages.

*P.* And you think it desirable that men should, if possible, raise themselves out of the savage state; or, if they find themselves so raised, that they should endeavour to sustain themselves, and not to sink down to the lowest depths of barbarism?

*H.* These are questions which, at all events, we have no difficulty in answering affirmatively.

*P.* I shall tax your patience a little, in order to avoid future misapprehensions, by putting a few more questions, the answers to which may appear self-evident. Do you think that men must be gifted with a high order of intelligence to perceive that laws of some kind must be established and maintained by a force sufficient to command obedience to them?

*H.* A very low order of intelligence would suffice to convince mankind of the necessity of maintaining some kinds of law and government, and that there must be force adequate to secure obedience to them. A somewhat higher order of intelligence might be required to originate and contrive them.

*P.* You are drawing a distinction between two orders of intelligence which have played parts in man's history sufficiently remarkable to deserve more than a casual recognition. Is this higher order of intelligence observable in many other departments of human affairs besides that of legislation?

*H.* The difficulty would be to find where it is not. Your highly intelligent countrymen are at this very time bringing together the more distant parts of our country by railways



and magnetic telegraphs, and are traversing our oceans and rivers, against wind and tide, with their steam-vessels, and are teaching our countrymen, who, in these respects, must be confessed to be of inferior intelligence, to assist in constructing, working, and repairing them. And the crowds at the stations and ports show no want of readiness to avail of the means of transport and communication placed at their disposal.

*P.* These grand contributions to human power and comfort which have been bestowed upon you by my countrymen were the inventions and contrivances of a very small number of men of advanced intelligence among them, although since generally taken up and adopted all over Europe and America, and even penetrating into Asia and Africa. As throwing some light upon what may be supposed to be man's capacity to contrive for himself in other matters as well as in legislation, irrespectively of the assistance supposed to be derived from inspired writings, can you tell me whether the modern interpreters of the Vedas have produced from these volumes any directions or suggestions available for forwarding the works of steam-transport and telegraphic communication?

*H.* You are laughing at us. We should not have expected that from you.

*P.* Nay. You have given us, most appropriately, as examples of human capacity, some of the latest and most admirable of contrivances, requiring for their adoption and management a most carefully constructed system of laws and regulations. When we are inquiring about man's capacity to originate laws in general for himself, without direct guidance from inspired sources, how can we omit asking ourselves whether man has derived any assistance from those same sources, in accomplishing what are universally regarded to be the most stupendous, as well as the latest, of his achievements?

*H.* We cannot divest ourselves of the suspicion that a tone of raillery is concealed in the words which convey your question. But be you ironical or serious, we admit, without hesitation, that we never heard any of our priests pretend to



anything so absurd as that the Vedas contained instructions for contriving and working railways, steam-vessels, or magnetic telegraphs.

*P.* I should be sorry if you thought that I wished covertly to throw ridicule upon, or to disparage, the Vedas. Pray understand, therefore, that the clergy in England, the birth-place of railways and magnetic telegraphs, do not pretend to have drawn any instruction, or tendered any assistance, to projectors and contractors, out of the Bible; and as I passed through Turkey and Egypt, I found the interpreters of the Koran equally silent about any instruction which they were capable of deriving from inspiration, to guide the promoters of the improvements in progress there.

*H.* You have cleared the question from some of the mists which prevented our understanding it. We see clearly enough that the necessity of making laws for their own government is imposed upon men as one of the conditions of their existence in a state of society. In the examples which you have given, it appears that men, by the exercise of their reasoning faculties, are equal to the work in the latest and most complicated of their undertakings, leading to the inference that in the simpler and easier they could scarcely be at a loss to succeed as well. Instructions from an inspired source to help them, if to be had, would only alter the form of the conditions with which men must comply, since their intelligence would have to be exercised upon the interpretation of the laws derived from inspiration, and upon the application of them. The exercise of their skill in interpretation would be severe enough, if there were but one book claiming devout obedience from mankind. But there are many; not translations and adaptations, so to speak, of currents of thought and language from the same fountain-head, but currents of thought and words from several fountain-heads—confused, turbid, antagonistic, and irreconcilable.

*P.* We may now return to the question, How ought men to set about the work assigned to them of making laws for their own government?

*H.* We are inclined to imitate those of our countrymen, who allowed themselves to be taught by yours how to construct railways and magnetic telegraphs. We shall not be able to get on without some help from you.

*P.* My help will be most effectually given by showing you how to become independent of the help of others. Let us examine how men set about and execute other works in which they are constantly engaged, and what objects they have in view. In all the countries which I have traversed, I have observed a large portion of the inhabitants engaged in tilling the ground. What is the purpose of this apparent uniformity of employment?

*H.* To obtain the materials out of which to make their food and clothing.

*P.* Do the people in the various countries of the earth direct their labour to the production of the same materials?

*H.* No. They would be disappointed in their expectations if they did. The soil and climate of some countries are better adapted to the growth of wheat, oats, barley, hemp, and flax; and those of others to rice, maize, cotton and sugar, coffee and tea.

*P.* Are the methods of cultivation as various as the crops?

*H.* Quite; and, in addition, we know that in the same countries, some methods have been supplanted by others considered more likely to bring into play the producing powers of the soil and climate. Contrivances for irrigation in some districts, and for draining in others, have entirely altered the appearance of the country.

*P.* For the better?

*H.* Yes; for the better.

*P.* In your country, large quantities of cotton and silk are produced, and I think that the spinning of yarn and weaving of cloth have been arts known, and very generally practised, from time immemorial.

*H.* They have.

*P.* In England the soil and climate are suitable to the pro-

duction of neither silk nor cotton ; but its inhabitants spin more yarn and weave more cloth, perhaps, than the inhabitants of any other country. Have they not of late drawn large quantities of cotton from you, and have not you taken in return large quantities of yarn and cloth from them ?

*H.* We have, and we can answer, by anticipation, the question which you would next put to us. Our countrymen, profiting by the example and instruction afforded to them, as well as by the enterprise of your merchants, have learned that, by directing their attention to the production of cotton and silk, and of many other commodities which are much sought for but cannot be grown in England, they can obtain far larger supplies of cotton yarn and cloth than would otherwise be obtainable by them.

*P.* Can you tell me which has been the principal agent in accomplishing this change ?

*H.* Human intelligence, particularly as shown in the discovery of the properties of steam, and in the capacity of contriving the means of directing and controlling steam, so as to obtain its assistance in executing works, such as those for draining mines, driving piles, and lifting weights, too gigantic for mere mechanical or muscular forces, or those for spinning and weaving, at a rate so rapid and in quantities so large that the people required to do the work without the aid of steam, could not be supplied with the food, raiment, and lodging essential for their maintenance.

*P.* And in return for the products of your industry, for which your soil and climate are favourable, do the English supply you with anything besides yarn and cloth ?

*H.* We might say that yarn and cloth form an insignificant part of the commodities which we obtain from Europe. But the most important of all are the tools, instruments, and machines, from the cutlery, presses, cranes, and nautical instruments up to the locomotives which draw our trains, and the steam-tugs which tow our vessels against the currents of our mighty rivers.

*P.* Again, in addition to the many large towns which I have tarried in and passed through, every country is more or less dotted with the dwellings of the cultivators of the soil. What may have led to this uniformity of effort in seeking shelter, whether from cold and rain, or from the heat of the sun?

*H.* There can be but one answer to this question. Experience derived from their own sensations must soon have taught mankind how desirable some kind of protection from the nipping cold, the dripping wet, and the scorching heat, was to keep off pain and suffering, and to preserve them from sickness. Look where we will, from the hollowed tree and the gloomy cavern of the savage to the grandest mansion, we see the best contrivances of which man is capable, to provide himself with shelter.

*P.* In most of the large towns which I have visited, there are hospitals for the sick and wounded. In the principal cities of Europe there are several; and my countrymen have added to those which they found here, and have introduced every contrivance with which they were acquainted, for the solace and relief of suffering humanity.

*H.* And in spite of the not very flattering terms in which we have been compelled to speak of your missionaries, you will not, we trust, suspect us of being insensible to the skill and devotion of your physicians and surgeons.

*P.* What do you think of the practice of erecting large buildings appropriately furnished and fitted for the reception and treatment of the sick and wounded; of endowing them with funds for the maintenance of the patients and for the remuneration of nurses and other attendants; and of attracting to them the most eminent teachers and operators in medicine and surgery, with their pupils?

*H.* We cannot conceive of a practice better adapted for the cure and comfort of the sufferers, or for the advancement of knowledge and skill in the treatment of disease and wounds.



*P.* One of those discoveries, which of itself would suffice to shed lustre upon an age, has been of late adopted in all our hospitals, if it did not actually originate in one of them. By its use the most complicated and puzzling cases of disease are investigated, and operations unavoidable, and yet so painful, without its intervention, as to be almost unendurable, are performed while the patient is sometimes insensible and sometimes enjoying the most delightful dreams.

*H.* You are talking of chloroform. We have seen patients under its influence. The poorest in the land, by its means, may now obtain gratuitously painless cure, where the mightiest monarch could not, a few years ago, have purchased escape from torture and death even at the price of a kingdom.

*P.* After what has passed between us, I may take for granted that you will not expect my countrymen to be grateful to the inspired writers of the Vedas for the blessings of chloroform, nor be disposed yourselves to yield your gratitude for those blessings, if it were claimed from you, in behalf of the Bible or Koran, by the expounders of those books. But if we do not owe the use of chloroform to any of the inspired writings, to what do we owe it?

*H.* To observation and experiment; to the cultivation and progressive development of those faculties with which the mighty Lord of the universe, in the abundance of his goodness, has been pleased to gift us.

*P.* While men have been thus engaged, through innumerable generations, in tilling the ground, preparing food and clothing, building houses and cities, providing hospitals for the sick and wounded, and in attending to all those minute details disregard of which would cause failure in the grandest schemes, have they found the disposition to co-operate in these works, so indispensable to the general comfort, universal, or anything like universal, among their fellow-men?

*H.* We never heard of any country in which the disposition to co-operate in productive labour was anything like universal. It is much more general in some countries than



in others, and great changes have occurred in many regions of the earth ; the disposition to steady labour having almost died out in some, while in others the desert and wilderness have been transformed into cultivated fields and gardens, interspersed with cities and detached habitations.

*P.* Where the disposition to co-operate in the works of their fellow-men is not to be found, has there been observed any disposition to refrain from appropriating, consuming, and enjoying the fruits of labour ?

*H.* You are laughing.

*P.* Rather, I am trying to avoid taking anything for granted that might possibly be called in question, and at the same time to record faithfully whatever we agree to accept as indisputable.

*H.* You may record then, at once, as far as our assent is necessary for the purpose, that men who are not disposed to work are by no means indisposed to consume. The least hurtful of their practices is to beg from others of the fruits of their labour. Very many of them resort to deception, trickery, and violence, to obtain for consumption and enjoyment what they will not work to produce.

*P.* Have you obtained your knowledge of these facts by your own unaided experience—unaided, I mean, by any instruction from the Vedas, or the recognized expounders of them ?

*H.* Quite as much as any other portion of our knowledge concerning the ordinary affairs of life.

*P.* Is it a fact that the industriously disposed consume the fruits of their labour as fast as they produce them, or do they store up a portion to supply their future wants, and to guard against unfavourable seasons and other occasional mishaps ?

*H.* It is a fact that they store up. Otherwise whence our cities, warehouses, and bazaars, full of merchandise of every description, and all the other monuments of our ancestors' industry and self-denial, which we have inherited from them

with the tacit injunction that we should hand down our inheritance unimpaired, if not improved, to our posterity ?

*P.* And are the people who would obtain a share of all these good things by fraud and force as intent as others upon preserving unimpaired and undiminished for posterity what has been inherited ?

*H.* We have a saying among us that ill-gotten wealth is lavishly consumed. Frugality is but little practised by beggars, knaves, or decoits.

*P.* Considerable pains are taken by your present rulers, who certainly do not derive their inspiration from the Vedas, to protect you against thieves and swindlers. You will readily admit this, however much you may resent their intolerance in regard to some of your religious ceremonies and observances. But before they came among you, were highwaymen allowed to hold command of your roads, burglars to break into your houses, and swindlers to infest your bazaars, without any resistance being offered to their depredations ?

*H.* Property was certainly not so well protected as it is now, but it was not left quite unprotected.

*P.* Can you tell me what would be the consequence if property were quite unprotected—if plunderers of every description were left as free to take by fraud and force as producers are to acquire by labour, skill, and self-denial ?

*H.* Wealth would gradually disappear. Industry and frugality would be discouraged. Our fields and gardens would become wilderness and jungle, and our cities would fall into decay.

*P.* Our present business is to get at the results of man's unassisted experience. As you have never known a country the inhabitants of which were left without protection of some kind, how can you tell what would be the consequence of their being left unprotected ?

*H.* Because we can observe the consequences of the imperfect protection enjoyed, or of the partial want of protection suffered from. We have not been blind to the signs of im-

provement, when arrangements have been made in order to introduce a more effective protection. When we see the cultivated land bearing luxuriant crops, or the water-wheels, windmill-sails, and railway-trains in motion, we can tell what consequences would follow, if the labour of man, the water, the wind, and the steam were removed from the position in which each is producing its effect. Why should we not be able also to pronounce with equal confidence what would be the effect of removing from mankind all the motives which urge them to labour and to save?

*P.* How do you make out that the withdrawal of protection would act as a withdrawal of the motives to labour and save?

*H.* It is not disputed that men labour and save for the sake of the enjoyment which they expect to derive from the consumption and disposal of the fruits of their labour. Take away from them the feeling of security that this enjoyment will be theirs, or further, convince them that the fruits of their labour will be consumed, or wasted, or destroyed by others, and it follows that they will cease to labour, or that we have been mistaken in our estimate of the motives which urge them to labour and save.

*P.* You will correct me if I misconstrue the general purport of what you have been telling me. I gather from it, that among the many things which, as the world is constituted, men could not have failed to observe, is the propensity in a large number of their fellows to plunder, waste, and destroy the produce of other people's labour; and that they could as little have failed to infer that some means must be devised to put a curb upon this propensity, unless all expectations of comfortable existence were to be abandoned; and that no revelation of the Divine will, whether in the Vedas or in any other book, was needful to impart this knowledge or to suggest this inference from it.

*H.* We see nothing to correct in your statement. Our only reluctance, in making this confession to any one but you, would arise from the fear of being charged with presumption

and irreverence for setting up man's reason above God's revelation.

*P.* And would you be at a loss for an answer to the avowal of mistrust of God's power concealed in this ignorant attempt to deter you from the exercise of your reasoning faculties? If there be presumption or irreverence on either side, is it not more plausibly chargeable against those who deny God's power to make men capable of learning how to protect as well as how to produce the means of their subsistence, unless by specially revealing the knowledge long after their creation, and then deputing the work of promulgating his revelation to some of the incapable men who alone were at his disposal?

*H.* Your hint shall not be thrown away upon us. We shall not be haunted by this fear henceforward. To speak with scorn of men's reasoning faculties is, at least, as disrespectful to God who created man, as to doubt whether books, said to contain his revelations, are really faithful records of them, especially seeing that there are several of these books, the interpreters of each of which agree only in one thing, that is, in proclaiming all other revelations to be the works of impostors.

*P.* With all the examples of man's work before us, which, as the less difficult and more obvious, should you expect would have taken precedence in the order of discovery and application,—a pump to lift and distribute water, a clock to mark time, a barometer to measure the weight of the air, a locomotive to draw a train, a magnetic telegraph to convey intelligence as rapidly to distant as to contiguous places, or some organization to defend life and the products of labour from assassins and thieves?

*H.* We should think the last the easier and more obvious, although we can readily understand that the first attempts for the purpose would be coarse and comparatively ineffective.

*P.* Your answer implies an expectation that the first attempts at organizing protection to life and the fruits of



industry, like the first attempts at everything else, would be less effective, less judicious, less creditable as works of goodness and wisdom, than later attempts for the same purpose.

*H.* It does; and we think our expectations are justified by what has been preserved to us of the actual proceedings of men as they have progressively advanced in intelligence.

*P.* Which would be more consonant with a deep sense of Divine wisdom and goodness,—to attribute the coarse laws devised by man in periods of barbarism to direct inspiration from heaven, or the laws as improved up to the latest time, although still held to be susceptible of further improvement?

*H.* There can be but one answer to such a question. The surprise to us is, that the question should never have suggested itself to us before. That men just escaping from the savage state should be prone to look upon every new blessing brought within their reach, and every new regulation or command to which they were told to submit, as direct emanations from their god or gods, or that the more astute among them should endeavour to strengthen their hold over the unruly people whom they would govern by claiming to be the interpreters and executors of the Divine will, we can well understand. The mystery to us is how some pious men in these days can countenance the superstition that the barbarous and contradictory laws of old were the special work of God to which men are bound to yield implicit obedience for evermore, while other pious men represent God as having abandoned his own imperfect attempt at legislation to men, leaving them to exercise their wits in introducing efficiency, consistency, and humanity into the crude performance consigned to them.

*P.* Having arrived at the conviction that men could never have groped their way out of barbarism without accomplishing, among many more difficult things, some rude scheme for protecting person and the fruits of labour against violence and plunder, what may we infer would have been attempted and



accomplished before men could have risen to our present state of civilization ?

*H.* The inhabitants of the various regions of the earth—each nation or race, or, more properly, the majority of each—would form themselves into communities, and grant power to one or more of their number, or acquiesce in the assumption of power by one or more of the most capable among them, to protect the community against the evil-disposed.

*P.* And, if not a first step, would it not be an early step with the chosen or self-appointed rulers to make known to their subjects the acts the performance of which they insisted upon, those which they left optional, and those which they prohibited ?

*H.* If these various kinds of acts, or the most important of them, were not actually specified or not generally understood from long and repeated experience, and which rulers were to abide by as well as the ruled, the powers intended for protection might be turned to purposes of oppression, and must be less effective for good.

*P.* And what name has been given to these understood resolves of rulers in regard to acts, whether expressly declared or gathered from precedent and continuous practice ?

*H.* Laws—perhaps we ought to say human laws, to distinguish them from what are called God's laws, or the laws of nature.

*P.* God's laws, or nature's laws, are but expressions, so far as they have a distinct meaning attached to them, for all the movements of the universe ; some known, others unknown, perhaps undiscoverable by man, but all subjects for his observation and study. Are not human laws, so far as they are acknowledged and permitted by God, a portion of God's laws ?

*H.* We have always been accustomed to think of human laws, and especially the laws of the strangers who have ruled over us, as something quite distinct from, and often at variance with, God's laws.

*P.* And as capable of overruling God's laws ?

*H.* That cannot be. We suppose there is no escape from the admission that the very existence of human laws shows them to be part and parcel of God's laws, since they could not exist without his permission.

*P.* Will it not be better to abstain from talking of human laws as God's laws, ill prepared as we are at present to judge of the merits of laws made by man ? Let us content ourselves, if only for brevity's sake, with speaking of human laws simply as laws by which we will understand rules of conduct emanating from a governing power, obedience to which is meant, as far as possible, to be enforced. Do you see any good in the habit of considering these laws as God's laws, seeing how often it has been found advisable to alter them, and how many further alterations in them are still under consideration ?

*H.* We are rather beginning to suspect that there may be much evil in it. We have no grounds for believing that men have yet reached perfection in making laws or performing any other work. Till they have arrived at that height, humility and piety will both recommend them to keep the disgrace of their imperfections to themselves, while they are striving to get rid of them.

*P.* We may safely say, that the imperfections still clinging to our laws are much more likely to be seen and removed when laws are understood to be man's work, than when they are received as God's, and, as a consequence, the imperfections in them held to be perfections which it would be sacrilegious to think of altering. Thus far we have directed our attention exclusively to acts enjoined or forbidden by law, but are there not many acts of which laws take no cognizance which, nevertheless, ought not to be passed over unnoticed—some which most good men wish to have performed, and others which they equally wish to see left unperformed ?

*H.* Very many. The occurrences and observances of everyday life are mostly made up of acts which laws leave

unnoticed. Acts of self-exposure and of self-denial, dictated by consideration for the wants and feelings of others, and acts originating in family affection and mutual attachments, and the opposites of these, engage our teachers of religion as much as the other acts of which we were speaking occupy the thoughts of rulers and law-makers.

*P.* I should have thought, after you had so lately been brought to recognize, contrary to your prepossessions, that law-making is just as completely man's work as any of the other works in which he is daily engaged, that you would have hesitated to resign thus rapidly and confidently to teachers of religion the work of distinguishing between good and bad in acts passed over by law-makers. Can you point out such a uniformity of observances in the manners and customs of different nations and epochs as would justify you in assuming that they must have been obtained direct through inspiration from God, or from the Vedas, since of course you would not allow them to be derived from any other revelation?

*H.* You may puzzle us, but because we have allowed that law-makers can do and have done their work independently of revelation, we are not bound to admit that the Vedas exercise no controlling or guiding power over our habits and customs.

*P.* I hope I shall not, even unintentionally, lead you to admit anything unproved. My wish is to do for you what I have done for myself, to adopt the method of questioning in order to obtain proofs on which to form convictions. How can I deny that the Vedas exercise an influence over your conduct when, as you have told me, the performance of penances is one of the means of earning the Divine favour which you have learned from them? Would any man inflict suffering upon himself, think you, solely for the sake of enduring the pain self-inflicted?

*H.* A penance means suffering self-inflicted in order to gain Divine favour.

*P.* Do not for a moment fancy that I am aiming to undermine your belief either in the authority or originality of the Vedas; but I must call your attention to the fact, that the Bible and the Koran both enjoin penance as one of the modes of obtaining favour in a state of future existence.

*H.* If we do not know that the Bible vies with the Vedas in recommending penance, it is no fault of the missionaries, for while they upbraid us with our superstitious practices, and particularly in regard to penance, they vaunt the efficiency of their own gloomy sabbaths, fasts, and days of humiliation, to turn away God's wrath, and to conciliate his favour. The Son of God, according to them, underwent the intolerable torture of fasting forty days and nights in the wilderness, and afterwards of suffering death upon the cross between two thieves, to induce his father to soften the dreadful sentence pronounced by him upon mankind. We do not take umbrage at your questions; and we admit that your inquiries are conducted with impartiality, although you do startle us now and then.

*P.* In considering penance as a means of pleasing the Deity, ought we to omit putting this question to ourselves: Which man is the more likely to please God, he who voluntarily endures pain and encounters danger for the benefit of his fellow-creatures, or he who surrenders himself up to be consumed by vermin, or submits to eat dirt in order "to hasten the union of his soul with the Divine Spirit"?

*H.* Your question is so put that we can only give one answer, unless we would represent God as a monster delighting in human suffering and debasement.

*P.* You and I are able to converse together in a friendly spirit, differing as we know we do, in our feelings and opinions upon many subjects. How happens it that such feelings of aversion have sprung up between you and the missionaries, and that many of your countrymen would ill-treat me if they had the power, and I did not conceal my sentiments?



*H.* Because many of our countrymen are ignorant and prejudiced, and you will excuse our saying the same of many of the missionaries, and possibly we ought to admit as much for ourselves?

*P.* Ought people to live together in harmony, whatever their differences of opinion? Ought candour to be encouraged? or ought the suppression of some opinions to be enjoined? Ought we to be degraded in our own eyes, or in the eyes of others—you, if you eat beef, a Jew if he eat pork, or I, if I travel on Sundays?

*H.* You must give us a little time to consider these questions.

*P.* I will add a few more to them. You will find that the consideration of any one will assist in the solution of all the others. Infants and children over the whole earth are entirely dependent upon their parents, or, where they have been deprived of their parents, upon other adults. Are we indifferent whether parents take care of their children?

*H.* We are not; and the Vedas are most impressive upon the duties of parents and of adults in general to children.

*P.* You are, doubtless, learned in the Vedas; I am not. But I observe in this country, as in my own and in others through which I have travelled, many children belonging to parents who are not possessed of the means of supplying them with the nutriment, clothing, and shelter indispensable for their healthy growth, and some neglected by parents who have sufficient means, and I ask, How is this? Ought it to be? Must it be? Can you assist me in answering these questions?

*H.* There is nothing in the Vedas which can be pleaded in justification of child-neglect.

*P.* In Europe, the expounders of the Bible speak in more positive tones. For, according to them, if one enormity is more solemnly denounced than another, it is child-neglect. And yet the most common, as well as to my mind the most distressing, sight that meets the eye of the contemplative man



all over the earth—over all those parts, at least, which I have visited—is the crowds of uncared-for and ill-cared-for children. Do your countrymen resemble mine in being as regardless in their conduct of care for children, as they are vehement with their tongues in upholding it as a religious duty?

*H.* We have not the information which would justify our attempting to make a comparison between our conduct towards children, and that which may be seen in Europe. We know how much the education, upon which their future conduct and well-being must chiefly depend, is neglected with most of them, and how fatally it is misdirected where not neglected. As one proof of the truth of this last statement, we may mention that the thought uppermost in the minds of those who direct the education of children is to teach them to read, and that the next, if not the only other thought, is to make them read the Vedas, or rather the words of the Vedas. However indifferent teachers may be about ascertaining that any meaning is gathered by the children from the words read, it is considered a great triumph when any of them are brought to repeat from memory selected passages. This practice, under the idea of education, is almost as bad as no education. It is worse in some respects, since it deludes many people into the belief that education in the proper sense of the term is being given. To those who place their chief hopes of extricating the mass of the people out of their present state of destitution and misery, and of enabling, as nearly as possible, the whole of them to share in our advanced and advancing knowledge and attainments, in better teaching and training, it is mournful to see the Vedas put into the hands of children in the first period of their education, to be read for the sake of the words, without comprehension of their sense. Nothing beyond this is attempted in most of our schools towards showing to children how they ought to act when they go forth to perform the duties of life.

*P.* I have been informed that the Koran is imposed upon children in the same manner, and I am ashamed to say that.

the Bible is treated quite as irreverently as the Vedas and Koran. If these three reputedly inspired and sacred writings be treated in this manner, how much of the well-being of the people, among whom any one of them is promulgated, can be attributed to them?

*H.* Whatever amount of well-being the Vedas might lead to if used judiciously, we cannot imagine their leading to any while handled as they are. It would be unfair to pronounce that the Vedas, or even the Koran and the Bible, cannot confer great blessings upon mankind till we see them fail in the hands of an intelligent priesthood.

*P.* One ground on which our respect for inspired books is claimed is their antiquity. Their antiquity implies that as causes of conduct they have been long in operation. Now, if in any country it can be shown that the conduct of its inhabitants has been long steadily undergoing change after change, can these changes be the effects of unchanging causes, or must they be the effect of changing causes?

*H.* Of changing causes, for we say, like causes produce like effects, and causes ceasing, their effects cease; and we must equally say, altered causes produce altered effects, or altered effects must be produced by altered causes.

*P.* Not to distract our attention by an unnecessarily wide field of observation, I will limit myself to those three large communities which profess to govern themselves respectively by the Vedas, the Koran, and the Bible, and I will ask how you reconcile the principles just enunciated with the notorious fact that while these inspired writings remain unaltered, the conduct practised, and the rules of conduct justified, have undergone changes so great that they might be supposed to be derived from altered inspirations, or to disregard of inspiration altogether?

*H.* Of course we can only defend our consistency by holding, as we do, that these inspired writings are really different from what they were. The words are the same, but they are differently interpreted; and hence they are altered, not unaltered

causes of conduct. Still more are the causes altered where the inspired writings are wholly or partly shelved, as seems to suit the altered notions of a society advancing or retrograding in intelligence.

*P.* What would you say a progressively improving state of well-being among the inhabitants of any one country must be owing to?

*H.* We should say to many causes, but principally to their improved conduct.

*P.* I could point to a country in which the inhabitants are more numerous and better fed, clothed and lodged, diseases are less frequent, accidents less fatal, processes of cure less painful, enjoyments more abundant and varied, and contentment more general than formerly. Their revealed religion is the same, and soil, climate, and forces of nature the same. To what causes, then, can we attribute such changes in effects?

*H.* Not to the causes which have remained unaltered; but to the change of causes, or the new causes which we have already mentioned under the expression "improved conduct."

*P.* Do you imagine that conduct can go on improving, if it be not accompanied by improved rules of conduct?

*H.* Scarcely. We know of no works that are better executed now than formerly, which are not set about under a better set of rules to guide the workmen employed.

*P.* But the country of which I am thinking is still grievously afflicted with beggary and want, with scenes of drunkenness, child-neglect, and wanton indifference to the fulfilment of engagements solemnly contracted. Can it be said, then, even of such a country, that conduct left by the law to the discretion of individuals is regulated as well as it might be to promote the general welfare?

*H.* It is to be hoped, and indeed we see reason to believe, that something better is yet in store for mankind.

*P.* In talking over these matters with you, I have deferred making use of some terms familiar to both of us, in order to

feel sure, beforehand, of the meanings that we mutually attach to them. If clearly understood, these terms greatly facilitate investigation and discussion. Otherwise, they are apt to introduce endless confusion and difficulties. Laws and morals are terms of this description. Does it appear to you that in our future conversations, there will be any impropriety in our agreeing that to the subject of "rules in general for the guidance of human conduct, as a means of promoting the general happiness," we will give the name "morals;" as to the subject of "those rules in particular, which are laid down and enjoined by the governing power," we give the name of laws?

*H.* We think some such terms to condense our expressions, and thereby to assist our inquiries, will be most useful; and we will do our best to keep steadily in mind what it is, and what it is not intended to denote by them, so that they may hasten and not retard, throw order and not confusion into, our thoughts upon the subjects which you are assisting us to understand.

*P.* We must not omit a precaution specially called for by the still very limited range of our knowledge, and the corresponding misdirection of our conduct. We must be careful to distinguish between morals as they ought to be, and morals as understood and practised in various countries and ages, between "morals proper" and "morals in action."

*H.* The ability to distinguish between these two, to point out where morals in action deviate from morals proper, and how they may be brought to correspond, is an acquisition sufficient to reward any course of inquiry, however laborious, even supposing the labour would not be a reward in itself.

*P.* To turn our new terms to account at once, let me ask, must we admit, with morals in general, as we did with that department of morals to which we give the name "laws," that men have been steadily advancing to a clearer knowledge and better practice of them; although, manifestly, there is still a call for much more knowledge and much better practice?

*H.* There need not be any hesitation in making that admission.

*P.* And if the Vedas, the Bible, and the Koran contain the elements of morals, and they have been coëval with all the frightful abominations approved and practised since mankind have been taught from them, to what must we attribute our present better appreciation of them?

*H.* We do not know to what else it can be attributed but to the advance of man himself in intelligence, and consequently in ability to appreciate and apply the principles which ought to guide his conduct.

*P.* To appreciate the sacred writings as they deserve, should intelligence be first cultivated, or should the study of the sacred writings be relied upon for the development of intelligence?

*H.* Judging by what we have seen and heard and read of the inferences drawn and practices justified out of inspired writings by ignorant and barbarous men, we certainly must wish that intelligence should take precedence of religion. But we do not at this moment see how, adopting the evidence on which this opinion is formed, we can avoid arriving at the further opinion that the study of religion should be indefinitely postponed, which is almost the same thing as abandoning it altogether.

*P.* I purposely deferred using the terms "laws" and "morals" till we had arrived at some notions at least approaching to clearness that we wished to express by them. May we not with advantage deal in a similar manner with the term "religion"?

*H.* Do you wish to make us believe that we have been talking of religion all our lives without knowing what we were talking about?

*P.* You might know, while those who listened to you might not know what you were talking about. The thoughts generally meant to be expressed by the term "religion" are of sufficient importance to claim more than ordinary care to



prevent misunderstanding. When I asked, as between the study of inspired writings and the cultivation of intelligence, which should have precedence, you substituted in your answer "religion" for "inspired writings," and then reduced yourselves to the distressing necessity in appearance of abandoning religion altogether. In so awkward a dilemma, ought you not to thank me for coming to your rescue with some such questions as these: are "religion" and "inspired writings" convertible terms? and if so, which "inspired writings"? Again, as each inspired volume has been variously interpreted, do you mean by "religion" the one of your choice as interpreted in the past, in the present, or as about to be interpreted in the future?

*H.* You have convinced us that your caution was not so misplaced as we imagined. We now see that we were running wild; but we will return to where you left us and try to profit by your advice.

*P.* Do not mistake me. I have no wish to go beyond the limits of what I have undertaken at your request—to assist you to introduce order and coherence into your own thoughts. In common with other men who have striven to do this, you will find, not only that you have something to learn, but also something to unlearn. Do you shrink from attempting the latter and more difficult achievement?

*H.* We are resolved not to do that. But old habits will now and then resume their mastery, and it appears as if you were about to persuade us that we had passed the larger part of our lives in dream-land.

*P.* Bear in mind that it will chiefly depend upon yourselves to make the real-land of life far more enjoyable than dream-land or a life of false promises. If, however, to defer the study of inspired writings, till intelligence has been awakened and cultivated, is to guard against the intrusion of false religions, and to lead inevitably to the comprehension of the one true religion, would you still tremble at the idea of what you call their indefinite postponement?

*H.* We ought not. Nevertheless, we cannot but feel troubled at what you are suggesting. We have been accustomed to believe that unless the sacred writings be taught to children, there will be no religious men and women.

*P.* Which means, according to your own admission as to the method of teaching the Vedas in your own schools, that unless children be crammed with the words of the hundred false religions and interpretations of religion, they will be indisposed, in their maturer years, to listen to the instruction of those who would make it impossible for them to miss distinguishing the one true religion hidden among them. But I have been unguarded and deviating into paths unfamiliar to me. We have been using this term "religion," and we have not yet settled what it is to signify.

*H.* With the amount of influence and work which you have assigned to "laws" and "morals," we do not see that there is anything for which a name is wanted, as regards the conduct of man towards his fellow-man. If so, the term "religion" must be reserved to designate something which bears exclusively upon the conduct of man towards God.

*P.* We found, in the course of our inquiry, that "morals" meant something more than "laws." Peradventure, future inquiries may show that "religion" means something more than "morals." Ought not this confusion into which you have plunged make you feel how necessary are the cautions which I impose upon myself and would recommend to you? If what is to go by the name of "religion" be something more than "morals," can we be fitted to enter upon that inquiry till we have completed another course of inquiry upon which we have not entered—a course to ascertain what conduct is moral, what immoral; in other words, which conduct will promote, and which will disturb, the general well-being of mankind?

## ON PLEASURES AND PAINS.



*H.* You have given an entirely new direction to our thoughts. We not only see that our judgments upon conduct which ought to be the basis of our judgments upon laws and morals, must be formed independently of religion, but we are beginning to suspect that correct notions concerning religion are impossible till some progress has been made in studying and understanding laws and morals. To study laws and morals is to study the distinctions between good and bad in human conduct—to learn how man ought to behave to his fellows, what dispositions the better and wiser portion of mankind ought to cultivate and desire in themselves and to encourage in others, and what particular kinds of conduct it would be expedient to enforce or to prevent by government authority. Not to have made considerable progress in the knowledge involved in all this is to have but a faint conception of goodness and wisdom. If we are borne out in these views, it seems to follow that a just appreciation of religion—of the perfect goodness and wisdom of God, is destined to be the last triumph of civilization, instead of coming to man at his first escape from barbarism. A race of ignorant savages may bow down before a stock or a stone, or, if a little more advanced, may tremble before some imaginary monster whom they try to propitiate with fulsome flattery and praise. But they cannot love and adore that of which they have no adequate conception—infinite goodness and wisdom united to omnipotence.

*P.* If you can preserve this state of mind, you will be

saved from many distractions and perplexities while pursuing the inquiries upon which you have entered. We have had enough of these distractions and perplexities, and, I may add, impediments also, in those parts of the earth which teem the most with advances in physical science and their successful application. You can testify to the impediments thrown in the way of your participating in all European improvements, unintentionally perhaps, both by your own priests and our missionaries. An ignorant man, who is not the victim of their particular delusions, suspects their honesty. An intelligent man questions their capacity. When our missionaries quitted their native land, they left behind them many others of their own calibre to persevere at home in the course which they are pursuing here. You will scarcely believe that there is not an improvement in laws and morals, to say nothing of improvements in physical science, the promoters of which have not had to fight against "religious difficulties" in order to confer benefits upon mankind. Do you feel as if you could apply all your powers to the purpose of ascertaining the distinctions between good and bad in conduct, undeterred by any fears of offending religion?

*H.* We can say that we have no misgiving. Whatever difficulties there may be in the work of ascertaining the distinctions between good and bad, in order to secure the first and exclude the second, they cannot be "religious" in our apprehension of that term.

*P.* There will be difficulties enough of another kind to exercise our sagacity, and test our powers of application. We must be cautious, also. At the very threshold, I must ask—What are these "good" and "bad," between which you wish to discriminate?

*H.* We cannot be far wrong if we apply the term "good" to everything which conduces to human happiness, and the term "bad" to everything which conduces to human misery, or which diminishes human happiness.

*P.* Are all people agreed in their notions of happiness?

Might one not be diminishing the happiness of some people while striving to promote the happiness of others?

*H.* If we could not promote the happiness of all simultaneously, we should be driven to strike a balance, and to make sure that the happiness conferred was in excess of the happiness abstracted.

*P.* Are we prepared to enter upon that computation till we have settled what we mean by "happiness"?

*H.* A state of happiness depends upon a prodigious number and variety of circumstances. We could not enumerate them all, if there be anybody who could. But we are quite at a loss for another expression by which to convey our meaning.

*P.* My reason for being thus particular is, lest we should mistake absence of meaning, or confusion of meaning, for mere difficulty of expression. If it be true that what makes the happiness of one man would make the misery of another, and that happiness is made up of many things, is it not also true that, amidst this number and variety, there are some ingredients essential to happiness of any kind?

*H.* We are new to this kind of investigation. We suppose there must be.

*P.* I shall endeavour to help you somewhat nearer to certainty, or rather to help you to perceive that you have grounds for certainty which you do not recognize. If the happiness of aggregates of individuals and of communities be so various and complex as to bewilder us while contemplating it in its entirety, the examination of some simple cases, if we can find any, may enable us to detect the method of approaching and solving the less simple. You have often observed very young infants. Signs of what you call happiness and unhappiness may be seen amongst them. What will you say constitutes their happiness?

*H.* It is little more than mere animal enjoyment. Pleasure in their food, and, after a few days, pleasure at the approach of food, at the mother's breast, or other source of gratification. To these may be added the pleasure of stretching and of



listening to the first sounds of their own making, of the consciousness of their own increasing powers, and of merely healthy existence.

*P.* And what constitutes their unhappiness?

*H.* Painful sensations from want of food and of the comforts essential to healthy growth, from wounds, sores, and other consequences of disease, and from what, as being associated with past suffering, they may have learned to consider the causes of future suffering.

*P.* There are learned people, I dare say, among your countrymen, as well as among mine, who would look upon this talk as the veriest trifling. But we had better incur the censure implied in this than risk being led into error by accepting as true that which requires to be proved, or, worse, that which might be disproved. We are anxious to make sure that we overlook nothing, and at the same time to take nothing for granted which is not grounded upon experience and correct interpretations of experience. May we begin, then, by admitting that happiness and unhappiness, in their origin or first stages, are each made up of sensations; or can we trace them back to an earlier stage?

*H.* We can conceive of nothing earlier. Consciousness of existence is the result of sensations: sensations of pleasure being the elements of happiness, and those of pain the elements of unhappiness.

*P.* In speaking of pleasures and pains as the elements of happiness and unhappiness, must we not add, in regard to very young infants, that their pleasures and pains are little beyond those of their five senses?

*H.* Very little. But other pleasures and pains soon come to be mixed with them, to increase or diminish, to enhance or alloy, them. To put them in the order of their development, they would be of feeling or touch, of taste, of smell, of sight, and of hearing; to which are speedily added those of memory, and of hope, or expectation, or fear.

*P.* Is it true that the causes of their pleasures and pains

do not act uniformly in one direction ; that they are susceptible of assuming a great variety of combinations ?

*H.* Combinations more various than we can pretend to enumerate. The same persons and the same objects which are sources of pleasure or pain to some are indifferent to others, and produce different feelings in the same individuals at different periods of their life.

*P.* Has your experience of children made you aware of any other pleasures and pains that assist to make up the sum total of their happiness or unhappiness ?

*H.* We have observed in children a great propensity to imitation ; and as they increase in strength and years, we think we are warranted in adding to their other pleasures and pains those of success and failure in their attempts to imitate others. In their attempts at imitation we see much exertion put forth and much perseverance exercised ; and the exertion and perseverance themselves made pleasurable or painful, according to the prospects of success or failure. We see, besides, pleasure in consciousness of power, and of the acquisition of new power, and of readiness and skill as instruments of power. Their attention to the instruction of those who will assist them is a striking proof of the pleasure which they derive from a consciousness of the possession of knowledge, and of skill in applying it. Corresponding with these pleasures are the pains of a consciousness of impotence, of incapacity, of ignorance, of unskilfulness, and of failure.

*P.* The pleasures and pains which you have just enumerated are intimately associated, although not so entirely as the pleasures and pains of the senses, with the pleasures and pains of other children, and of men and women. But are not the pleasures and pains of others also causes of pleasure and pain to everybody, even to a child ?

*H.* Certainly. It is impossible to overlook them as acting in this manner. From a very early age, the pleasures of companionship and of sympathy are elements seldom absent from any cup of happiness ; and the pains of isolation and

antipathy are ingredients almost sure to be found in a cup of misery.

*P.* I have often heard desire of approbation dwelt upon as an early characteristic of human beings. May not the approbation which gratifies that desire be included among pleasures, and the state of unsatisfied desire consequent upon the withholding of that approbation among the pains?

*H.* We doubt whether happiness could be enjoyed by anybody who was completely shut out from the approbation of others.

*P.* Let us return for a moment to the pleasures of the senses. The sources of most of these pleasures to children are soon seen by them to be the parents or elders around them. They have opportunities, as they grow up, of giving as well as receiving the means of gratification. May the act of giving or sharing or resigning the means of gratification be added to the other pleasures?

*H.* That there are such pleasures is matter of daily observation. Very young children may be seen pressing a share of their good things upon their nurses, and elder children upon their younger brothers and sisters, as well as upon their companions. But we cannot avoid seeing also that both children and adults seek pleasure in ways very different to these. Sad to say, pleasure can be enjoyed by inflicting pain upon others, as well as by giving them pleasure, by tormenting, destroying, and spoiling, as well as by delighting, constructing, and repairing.

*P.* And, as a set-off against these pleasures of inflicting pain upon others, cannot you mention any pleasures in encountering danger and enduring hardship in order to confer pleasure and security upon others, or, what amounts to the same thing, to save them from suffering and danger?

*H.* Happily, we can. Instances, where such pleasures are enjoyed, are of daily occurrence; from the trifling self-denials of family life to night-watchings at the bed of sickness and lingering death, from the ordinary struggles and trials to pro-

cure the means of subsistence for children and dependants to the fiercer encounters with storm, and fire, and battle to save others from death, or from sufferings worse than death.

*P.* Are there not also pleasures which are made up of the contemplation of future pleasures to be secured or of future pains to be averted, sometimes by abstinence from present enjoyment, sometimes by endurance of pain in undergoing severe labour, and in encountering danger? In addition to the earlier pleasures of childhood, which consist of present enjoyments with an unconsciousness or heedlessness of the future, are there not pleasures of later growth, the absorbing interest in which neutralizes the attractions of many former pleasures, and deadens the sting of many pains formerly held to be unbearable?

*H.* Pleasures such as these form much too large a portion of general happiness to be excluded from our list. The very existence of man in a state of society, as the inhabitant of an earth overspread with cities and cultivated fields, is dependent upon a large preference of future to present pleasures. As an expansion of the same thought, we might add to the preference of future to present pleasure, the preference of present to future pain.

*P.* And does not this really mean that one present pleasure is capable of supplanting another present pleasure, or of smothering a present pain?

*H.* That is to say, the present pleasure from the confident anticipations of a future pleasure, or of immunity from a future pain, more than neutralizes the desire which would otherwise be felt to enjoy the present pleasure, and to avoid the present pain, the consequences of which must be future privation of pleasure, or future endurance of pain. Many a widow may be said to have enjoyed the pains of death on the funeral pile of her husband, in the conviction of thereby securing for herself the enjoyment of his embraces to all eternity.

*P.* And of escaping the scoffs and revilings, particularly

from her own sex, sure to await her, if she were to shrink from the pile and survive in widowhood ?

*H.* Let her conduct be explained as you will, the widow who sacrifices herself enjoys the pleasure of thinking that she is securing eternal happiness, or avoiding future temporal misery, or both together.

*P.* Judging from what has been recorded and from what may be seen in every country of the earth, will our enumeration of pleasures be even an approach to completeness, if we take no note of the pleasures of emulation, of display, of triumph, of revenge, of hatred, of avarice, and of drunkenness and gluttony ?

*H.* We should have expected to hear you talk of the pains, rather than the pleasures, of vice. Do you conjoin with those pleasures any of the pains of virtue ?

*P.* Your antithesis conveys a rebuke appropriate enough to those who use terms for which they have no fixed meaning. I may have some thoughts about the classes of ideas which "virtue" and "vice" ought to be the names of. But it was you, not I, who introduced the names. We are preparing to enter upon, and examine into, the distinctions between good and bad, and virtuous and vicious, and must abstain from characterizing any pleasures as vicious, or pains as virtuous, till we have agreed upon some standard or test whereby to judge them. There is need of caution even in dealing with the words "pleasure" and "pain." I have availed of them for want of others in use, and less ill-used, to designate those opposite states of feelings of which we are conscious in ourselves, of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, content and discontent, comfort and discomfort, from whatever causes those states may arise, and to whatever consequences they may lead. When we hear people talk of a man of pleasure, we never think of a man whose enjoyments are much regulated by considerations of their bearings upon the enjoyments of others, or even of himself at some future period. The opposite of a man of pleasure might be called, if it were not for the strangeness of the



expression, a man of pain. Now, if a man had inured himself to acts of, what he considers, self-denial, self-sacrifice, or self-torment, would you say that he enjoyed the pleasures, or suffered the pains, of virtue?

*H.* We should certainly prefer the self-tormenting man to the man of pleasure.

*P.* You possibly have good grounds for your preference, and in due time I shall be delighted to hear them. Meanwhile, I accept your hesitation in answering my question as a tacit confession that you are not prepared to offer an answer which would be satisfactory to yourselves. I quite agree with you that a man who can enjoy himself, regardless of the effect of his pleasures upon the pleasures of others, must be a contemptible, and may be a noxious, man. But what influence will your self-tormenting man exercise over the pleasures of other men?

*H.* We admit not a favourable one in general. There are some who will admire his powers of endurance, and worship him as a saint. But, in most people, feelings of horror and disgust will be produced, according as he is the victim of mutilation or of vermin.

*P.* Is it found that men who are given to self-torment are indifferent whether other men are disposed to conform to their practices, and, besides, to admire them?

*H.* As far as we have been able to observe, they are not indifferent. They like to see others striving, although never quite succeeding, to come up to them in devotional self-torture. The pleasures of mortification would be greatly impaired, if self-tormentors were deprived of the admiration and reverence of a crowd of followers. And to the pleasures of self-torture they would gladly add those of witnessing the torture of the unbelievers, who look upon them as having better claims for admission as patients to the ward of a hospital than as saints to a niche in the temple.

*P.* We have the same type of man in Europe—men given to devotional exercises which they profess to enjoy, while

they claim to be approved, if not to be revered for the conscientiousness with which they go through them, as though they were penances and pains, rather than pleasures. They cannot endure that others should look upon their performances with an eye rather of pity than of respect. Whatever your feelings may be in contemplating the devotional pleasures of your fakirs and our saints, it is notorious that they are looked upon with approbation by crowds of worshippers. Moreover, we can no more doubt that there are such pleasures, than that there are pleasures of self-denial, self-risk, and self-sacrifice for the sake of the very young and very old, of the sick and infirm, of society, and of mankind. But is there not an obvious distinction between these two classes of pleasure?

*H.* We should say that the essence of one class of pleasures was a consciousness of undergoing privation in the service of God, and of the other, a consciousness of undergoing privation in the service of our fellow-creatures.

*P.* Does our experience of human conduct bring us to the knowledge that, all over the world, men have been able to persuade themselves that they can serve God without serving their fellow-creatures, and also serve their fellow-creatures without serving God?

*H.* It does. We might say, besides, that men have become possessed of the persuasion that they can serve God by inflicting torments, not only upon themselves, but upon their fellow-creatures, and have found pleasure in trying to serve God in these ways, deploring to God, without the slightest suspicion of their inconsistency, the hardship of the task imposed upon them, and unconscious of any offence against God or man.

*P.* We have now a sufficient sample of the pleasures and pains which make up the states of what men call happiness and unhappiness, to try our hands at the distinctions which can be pointed out among them, and at the inferences useful for the guidance of our conduct which may be drawn from

them. Is there anything which strikes you, as you run them over in your memory?

H. We should say that some of them were more natural, and some more artificial than others. The pleasures of taste and of the other senses, and of the feeling of health and contentment, and the pains of hunger and thirst, and of sickness and discomfort, are natural: whereas the pleasures of ambition, of success, of pride, and of self-torture, and the pains of slights, discredits, repentance, and humiliations are artificial.

P. Do you mean by "artificial" that the pleasures and pains to which you apply that designation, are exclusively of human contrivance—that similar pleasures might be contrived *ad libitum*, and that all such pains might be prevented?

H. We could hardly affirm that. We should, perhaps, express our meaning better, were we to call the former pleasures and pains part of the inevitable and universal conditions of existence, and to describe the latter as more or less avoidable and partial.

P. But would it not be strictly in accordance with what we have observed to recognize that the influence of some of the pleasures and pains which you are inclined to class as inevitable, may be counteracted and even overpowered by some of the others which you class as avoidable? Does not self-torture imply relinquishment of the pleasure of gratified taste, or the voluntary endurance of pain for the sake of some other pleasure, real or imaginary? The man who, while suffering the pangs of hunger and thirst, surrenders his crust of bread and cup of water to a fellow-creature whose sufferings are more poignant than his own, does he not prove that the more partial and artificial pleasure of benevolence may smother the universal and natural pain of hunger and thirst?

H. He certainly does. And thus we seem to be in contradiction with ourselves. Perhaps the real distinction—and we think there is one, although we have failed to hit it—is, that the former pleasures and pains begin at birth and con-

tinue with us more or less through life, while the latter are of subsequent growth, and although powerful enough at times to master the former, are less universal.

*P.* Have you hit upon a distinction there which will assist us to any inferences or conclusions that we may turn to account in examining into the sources of pleasures and pains?

*H.* We cannot say that we have.

*P.* We will not despise it on that account. Like other truths, the application of which is not perceptible, a use for it may be found hereafter. Meanwhile, let us pursue our inquiry in another direction. Some of these pleasures and pains are, as you say, of earlier development than others, while the influence of all upon different individuals and nations varies greatly, and seemingly without regard to the earliness or lateness of their growth. Can you discern what it is that sets in motion, and endows with comparative force, the pleasures and pains and combinations of them which make up the various states of opinion concerning happiness among different individuals and nations?

*H.* We don't see our way, even how to set about finding an answer to that question.

*P.* We have before us various states of being, which we find by different individuals and nations are differently considered to be states of happiness and unhappiness. We have examined into the elementary pleasures and pains of which these supposed states of happiness and unhappiness are made up. We find that the same varieties of feeling and estimate are observable in regard to these elementary pleasures and pains. Are these various states of being equally states of happiness or unhappiness? and whence these varieties of feeling and opinion in regard to them? Are not these the questions to which we are seeking answers?

*H.* They are. But we fear that our search would be vain without your assistance.

*P.* As there are other varieties among human beings besides those of feeling and opinion in regard to the pleasures

and pains which constitute happiness and unhappiness, an inquiry into the causes of some of these other varieties may suggest to us a method of ascertaining some of the causes of the phenomena which are at present inexplicable to us. All your Hindoo children speak Hindostany, our English children speak English, and the French, German, Spanish, Italian, and Chinese children, all communicate with their parents, play-mates, and neighbours, in the language peculiar to each. Whence these varieties?

*H.* The children of each nation are differently taught. From their earliest days they hear the sounds of the language prevalent in their own country. Nature leads them to imitate these sounds, and they ultimately acquire the language itself.

*P.* Do you feel quite satisfied with this explanation of the origin of the varieties of language which prevail in the world?

*H.* As a first step in the explanation it seems to us perfect. What first introduced these varieties which children continue through imitation from their parents is a mystery to us. Your missionaries were wrath with us because we could not accept their explanation of the confusion of tongues introduced to stop the building of the tower of Babel.

*P.* Do you think that, if a number of infants of any one of these various nations were to be transferred at birth from their native country to another where a different language prevailed, they would readily acquire the language of the country to which they were transferred?

*H.* We have never heard of any result at variance with this wherever the experiment has been made. It is well known, besides, that if pains are taken for the purpose, the young will not only acquire the language of the country in which they are born, but other languages also.

*P.* You may have observed how generally children, who are born and bred near the sea-shore and on the banks of rivers, take to the water and learn to swim, while those born



and bred in forest lands and among the mountains, take to climbing and hunting. Would you account for their varied acquirements in the same way ?

*H.* Certainly.

*P.* Again, in religion, or what goes by the name : the doings of our own times and of the past, as recorded in history, reveal to us a variety of ceremonies and observances, some to propitiate angry gods, some to gratify exacting gods, some to soften cruel gods, some to pacify revengeful gods, some to bribe greedy gods, and some to coax stingy gods, and almost all indicating a want of faith in and reverence for a God of infinite goodness and wisdom. Will the states of society, in which children are born and bred, account also for the varieties of religious observances to which they betake themselves ?

*H.* We see no reason to doubt that they will, and also for the estrangements, unamiable feelings, spites, hatreds, and persecutions between the individuals of different persuasions and sects, frequently most bitter, where the divergences of creed seem to be smallest.

*P.* Do you think that a child of one of the missionaries would, if taken away from its parents, be brought to worship your god with three heads and one body, and to believe in the transmigration of souls ?

*H.* Yes, and one of our children might be brought to worship your trinity in unity, to accept the doctrine of the atonement and of the redemption of sin, and to believe in the goodness of God, concurrently with the all but certainty of eternal damnation for the greater part of mankind. But your missionaries cannot bring our men of mature growth and understanding to fall in with their fables.

*P.* Truce awhile to the missionaries. You are living proofs of the difficulty of changing, I will not say of improving, the convictions of grown-up people, however easy it may be to shape those of infants and children. With no more than this cursory glance at the varieties of habits, opinions and attain-

ments, and their proximate causes, can you now venture to guess why some people take pleasure in making a meal off beef or pork, while others would feel the pains of hunger less unendurable than the touch or taste of those to them abominable and loathsome meats?

*H.* We cannot err in attributing these varieties to the different circumstances, in the midst of which they were born and bred.

*P.* To make sure that you are giving this answer advisedly, let me ask what you think would happen if a number of children of Christian parents were transferred at birth to the guardianship of Mahomedan or Hindoo parents, while a number of Mahomedan and Hindoo infants were similarly transferred to Christian parents?

*H.* The former would eschew, while the latter would in due time relish, beef and pork.

*P.* Have we grounds, think you, for generalizing so far as to affirm that the pleasures and pains which make up the sums of the happiness and unhappiness of individuals and nations depend greatly upon the trains of thought which are interwoven, as it were, with their beings, even from their very birth?

*H.* We see the importance of the answer which is to be given to this question, but we do not flinch from admitting that the grounds for such a generalization are quite sufficient.

*P.* Using the words "teaching" and "training" with their widest signification, as embracing all the circumstances which are brought to bear upon human beings from the hour of their birth, may we say that what will be their ideas or notions of pleasures and pains, happiness and unhappiness, depends greatly upon the teaching and training which will be bestowed upon them?

*H.* To deny this would be to deny what we have already admitted in other words. And, as at present advised, we see no reason for retracting or modifying the conclusions which we have thus far arrived at with your assistance.

*P.* I am better acquainted with the countries of Europe than with those of Asia. And I am aware of the influence which must be produced upon the characters of human beings by varieties of climate and soil. But, in order to exclude these from the comparison which I would invite you to make, let us fix our attention, not upon the inhabitants of different countries, but upon the inhabitants living at different epochs in the same country. The prospects of the children now growing up to manhood are almost as different from those of children a thousand years ago, as if they were living on a planet of altogether superior construction. As far as the knowledge of the people who inhabited the earth a thousand years ago could carry them, they were really not living upon the same planet. In those days the earth was an extended plain, with variation of mountains, valleys, and seas. Now it is a spheroid. Then it was motionless. Now it rotates on its axis and pursues its course round the sun in company with the moon, at the rate of more than 60,000 miles an hour. Electric and chemical agencies were then the terrors, now they are the admiration and solace, of manhood. Then, men in advance of their age, who foretold coming events, supposed to be incalculable, and accomplished results held to be unattainable by man, were feared and hated, and persecuted as sorcerers. Now they are admired and respected and rewarded. Must the children who grow up under the roofs of parents gifted with all this later knowledge, and surrounded by all the results of the skilful application of it, become very different men and women from those who were born and bred at the former period?

*H.* They must.

*P.* May this change be rightly ascribed to the difference of the teaching and training bestowed upon children at those two periods?

*H.* It may, understanding, of course, that the causes which led to the kind of teaching and training at each period remain to be ascertained.

*P.* Are there pleasures and pains connected with the acquiring all this knowledge, and the habits of thought and feeling, in regard to those who possess and use it, of which people in the olden time were quite unconscious?

*H.* We can scarcely err in saying that there are. We doubt whether anything near the same number of people took pleasure formerly as now, in investigating the causes of phenomena, and in applying the knowledge thus acquired to useful purposes. And men possessed of the attainments which result from observation and experiment are honoured and rewarded, where formerly they were feared and ill-treated. As truly as it may be said that the earth which we now inhabit is in many respects a different earth to that which our ancestors inhabited, so the pleasures which we enjoy and the pains which we suffer differ from those which constituted their happiness and unhappiness.

*P.* Does our experience of the states of being of the inhabitants of different countries, and of the inhabitants of the same country at different epochs, lead us to think that they enjoy very different degrees of happiness, and suffer very different degrees of unhappiness?

*H.* It does. To compare a country in which civil wars, religious persecution, famine and pestilence prevail, with another in which concord, toleration, plenty, and health prevail, and not to prefer the latter, would, we conceive, be all but impossible.

*P.* Again, if you were surveying at any moment of time the inhabitants of several countries, and they all appeared to be equally happy, although their pleasures and pains were dissimilar, can you think of any reason why the state of one set of people should be preferred to that of others?

*H.* We would not like to say off-hand that there may not be some, although one does not occur to us.

*P.* Or, if it appeared to you, at any one time, that the inhabitants of some districts enjoyed themselves much more than the inhabitants of other districts, would the lot of those

whose enjoyment was the greater be really the more enviable?

*H.* We must amend our former answer. It will not do to judge of people's happiness or well-being from a casual inspection of their state at any one time. A thoughtless people, on the eve of a famine, might be enjoying themselves, in appearance at least, much more than another which was cautiously providing against such a calamity. Clearly the lot of the latter would be the more enviable.

*P.* Your qualifying expression, "in appearance at least," intimates a doubt whether the people enjoying full allowance were really happier than those who were on voluntary short allowance at the approach of scarcity.

*H.* You would hardly expect us to forget that we have already taken note of that faculty latent within us which, under circumstances favourable to its development, enables us to elevate or transform what would otherwise be pain or privation into a pleasure, through a sense of the immensity of the future enjoyment to be earned, or of the future pain to be averted by that privation.

*P.* In estimating the comparative titles to our preference of two or more states of being, or of two or more lots of mixed pleasures and pains, could you arrive at a satisfactory judgment without including a consideration of the consequences attached to the enjoyment of the pleasures, and to the endurance of the pains, comprised in the several states?

*H.* Not if our estimate be meant to embrace the whole life of an individual, or the whole history of a nation, or the future of the human race.

*P.* Is there not another classification of pleasures and pains suggested by what you have been stating which would be likely to assist us in selecting the best lots accessible to us?

*H.* You mean the classification of them according to the consequences—even the remote consequences—by which they will be followed, that is, according to the future pleasures



and pains which experience has convinced us will inevitably grow out of the present.

*P.* Have you any doubt about the possibility or the usefulness of such a classification ?

*H.* About neither. Our only doubt is as to the range of this possibility. According as it is limited, so must the usefulness of the classification be limited also.

*P.* Do not we find as we advance in knowledge that, although we become daily more conscious of the limits beyond which our faculties cannot carry us, we also find how indefinable, if not unlimited, is the extent of the field yet to be explored over which our faculties have scope for exercise—from which they are not excluded ?

*H.* We do certainly ; and therefore it was not very discreet in us to make our knowledge, or rather our ignorance, the measure of the possibility, or of the usefulness, of the classification of present pleasures and pains according to the future pleasures and pains of which they must be the causes.

*P.* Granting, then, that pleasures and pains, otherwise similar, vary greatly in regard to their consequences, let us examine a little further before we come to a decision concerning the extent to which our classification may be carried and utilized ; let us compare some lots of pleasures and pains, or some states of present being which we will assume to be equivalents, no regard being had to the future, in order to classify them according to the consequences seen to follow from them. I will begin with the states of industry or exertion, and of idleness or inaction ; what shall we say of their consequences ?

*H.* The consequences of the first are wealth, the consumption and use of which are indispensable to well-being ; of the second, absence of wealth.

*P.* Passing on to the states of studiousness, or of fondness for exercising powers of observation, reflection, computation, and thoughtfulness, and of contentment with intellectual torpor ; what are the consequences of these two states ?

*H.* Of the first, knowledge of the best means for making industry productive, and for turning wealth to the best account; of the second, ignorance of both those means of promoting well-being.

*P.* Next, as to the states in which gratification is sought, by striving to acquire aptitude and readiness in executing the works suggested by intelligence, and in which gratification is enjoyed without effort to acquire skill?

*H.* The consequences of the first are those successions of improved contrivances to make life agreeable which gladden our eyes, and make us hopeful of the future; and of the second, unskilfulness and inability to protect ourselves against the destructive play of the elements, and to make those very elements minister to our comfort.

*P.* There are states in which the consumption of wealth is habitually regulated by a due regard to the claims of the future, and in which wealth is consumed with no calculation, or with an under-estimate of the claims of the future?

*H.* The consequences of the first of these are, probable abundance of wealth and certain security against famine; of the second, certain scarcity and possible starvation.

*P.* States of honesty, or of respect of property; and of dishonesty, or disregard of the rights of property?

*H.* The consequences of the first of these are, the putting forth the powers of production and the saving of the wealth desirable for future increase of production as well as for security against want, and the development of all such contrivances for making industry productive, as division of labour, interchange, buying and selling, and borrowing and lending; of the second, discouragement, at least, of the more refined, complicated, and powerful agents of production, and of the inclination to forego present consumption.

*P.* Another opportunity for contrasting consequences is presented by the states of sobriety and dissipation.

*H.* The consequences of the first are, comparatively healthy and lengthened existence, and the security derivable from

unimpaired faculties ; and of the second, disease and premature decay, suspension and deterioration of the faculties, whether for producing wealth or for consuming it judiciously.

*P.* I will suggest one more comparison—one between the states of concentrating all available means of enjoyment in self, regardless of others, and of ever desiring and seeking to share them with others ?

*H.* The consequences of the first would be wide-spread misery. The duties of parent to child, of children to parents, and of friends and neighbours, would be neglected. And as the wants and infirmities of our nature, from infancy to old age, make it impossible for men to be independent of one another, no resources of wealth, however abundant, could supply the absence of human fellowship and sympathy. The consequences of the second would be, if combined with intelligence, to fill up, as much as possible, every gap in the safeguards against misery constructed by industry, skill, and economy.

*P.* Might we, if so disposed, and if it were desirable for the further elucidation of the subject which we are investigating, carry our examination into a number of other varieties of present conduct, for the purpose of comparing the consequences with which each is likely to be followed ?

*H.* Almost to any extent you please.

*P.* When some lines of conduct—such as the industrious, intelligent, economical, honest, sober, courageous, and kind—are found to be followed by consequences of a pleasurable nature, more than sufficient to outweigh any pain or sense of self-denial that might attend the present conduct, is any name given to such conduct ?

*H.* We suppose that such conduct is generally called “good,” or is what ought to be called so.

*P.* And when lines of conduct—such as the indolent, ignorant, wasteful, dishonest, drunken, cowardly, and cruel—are found to be followed by consequences of a painful nature, more than sufficient to outweigh the pleasure of the present conduct, what name is assigned to that conduct ?

*H.* It is, or at all events it ought to be, called "bad."

*P.* Does it appear to you that an investigation into all kinds of conduct, in order to ascertain which kinds are attended with a preponderance of pleasure over pain to mankind, and which with a preponderance of pain over pleasure to mankind, and to classify them accordingly, is quite within the scope of the human faculties?

*H.* After the very plain and simple course of inquiry in which you have been leading us, we cannot doubt that it is.

*P.* Am I to understand that you agree with me that you could form, from observation and experience, sound judgments upon human conduct, and draw them as easily and satisfactorily, without as with reference to the Vedas?

*H.* You may understand that, as at present advised, we think we could do not only as well, but better, without being tied down to the Vedas, the study of which we would reserve for other purposes. Neither (and let that be told to your missionaries) would we look for any assistance in forming our judgments upon human conduct either to the Bible or the Koran. The same reasoning faculties, bestowed upon men by their Maker, which have enabled them to trace out the laws which are obeyed by the movements of the heavenly bodies, will also suffice to discover the laws of conduct best adapted to promote the general well-being of themselves. The expounders of inspired writings, in their ignorance and presumption, have, it appears to us, in all ages and countries, done their utmost to obstruct and to mislead their fellow-men in their efforts to gain knowledge, whether of the laws for the government of the universe, or of the laws for self-government.

*P.* Having succeeded, as you think we might succeed, in classifying different kinds of conduct into good and bad, that is, according to the preponderance of pleasure over pain, or of pain over pleasure, to mankind at large, of which each kind is likely to be the cause, we yet have to inquire how far it is within the compass of the human faculties to bring individuals to that state of feeling which will incline them to take pleasure

in the performance of good acts, and to turn from the committal of bad acts, as from pain.

*H.* That we suppose to be the work of education, from infancy upwards.

*P.* And by whom is this work to be performed?

*H.* The work, of course, must devolve upon each generation of adults; firstly, upon parents and other guardians of infancy; and secondly, upon them, aided by educators specially prepared to undertake the teaching and training of the young.

*P.* If it be true that our reliance for forming the habits and dispositions of each generation must be placed in the generation immediately preceding, what opening is there for the improvements still so earnestly longed for? How is it to be accomplished that each generation shall be anything better than a copy of its predecessor?

*H.* Our hopes for that, as for everything else that is desirable, are in the very constitution of man. He is not a merely copying or imitating creature. He is an inquirer and experimenter besides. By one set of faculties he copies from the past; by the other he learns in the present and for the future; and thus, despite convulsions and temporary and local retrogressions, advances in knowledge, and power, and happiness.

*P.* The work of education has hitherto fallen so short of accomplishing what you are expecting from it, that I ought not to omit to inquire what difficulties have stood, or still stand, in its way. Have you thought upon these difficulties, and the means of overcoming them, and can you point out the chief among them?

*H.* The chief, as far as we can judge, are to discover and apply that treatment and discipline to the young, which will dispose them to seek enjoyment, or pleasure, or happiness, in that exercise of their faculties which is most likely to lead to future happiness; and that method of imparting knowledge which will bring the young to acquire their knowledge by re-discovering for themselves that which has already been



discovered, so that their faculties shall be trained to acquire for themselves, on leaving school, all the further knowledge which it will be desirable for them to possess and apply.

*P.* And do you include, in this desirable scheme of treatment and discipline, the endeavour to cultivate the capacity of foregoing what would otherwise be present pleasure, and of enduring what would otherwise be present pain, through the vivid appreciation of the future pleasure to be thereby secured, or of the future pain to be thereby averted?

*H.* Of course; recognizing, at the same time, that the ability to counterbalance, where desirable, the sense of present pleasure or pain by the sense of the greater future pleasure or pain is the climax of educational skill. Our most renowned fakirs gained their reputation for holiness by the contented spirit in which they endured what, by ordinary mortals, would be considered the severest torture, self-inflicted, with a view to secure eternal felicity.

*P.* Many similar instances of success in subduing the immediate sense of what might otherwise be considered pain or disgrace are to be met with among Brahmins and Mahomedans; and the desire to gain the favour of Heaven by such means is far from being extinct in Christendom. How would you distinguish this species of devotee from the type of human excellence which you have been attempting to describe?

*H.* The first takes pleasure in present pain, if we may so express it, or in abnegation of present pleasure, with a view to the eternal bliss which he hopes thus to secure for himself. The second does so with a view thereby to take his share in contributing to the welfare of his fellow-creatures, in combination with his own future happiness.

*P.* Is there not need for caution in seeking to make regard for the future outweigh regard for the present, lest a becoming attention to the claims of the present should be neglected? Are not misers people who bring themselves into this deplorable state?

*H.* They are fakirs without the thought of pleasing God

by their self-abasement. According to our judgment the object or end which ought to be aimed at, is present enjoyment without sacrificing the future, and security for the future without sacrificing the present. Experience shows that there has hitherto been a much greater tendency to sacrifice the future to the present, than the present to the future.

*P.* In estimating the comparative states of happiness of the inhabitants of different regions, why is it that the abundance and quality of their wealth, their judgment in consuming it, and their courage and skill in defending it, are almost sure to be the chief objects upon which our attention will rest?

*H.* Because in these we see proofs of the existence of almost everything else we would search for—of the means of present enjoyment, with a due regard for the claims of the future, well-stocked farms, factories and mills, with all best known appliances, warehouses and shops full of merchandise, roads, docks and canals, with the carriages and vessels incessantly moving to and fro, postal contrivances and telegraphs to provide certainty and rapidity of communication; hospitals and asylums for the sick and afflicted, and arsenals and well-trained forces to defend all these means of conferring pleasure and of warding off pain.

*P.* Let us now enumerate the present pleasures a taste for which it is alone desirable to have cultivated, inasmuch as all other present pleasures are apt to be followed by pains or sacrifices of pleasure, more than commensurate with them. We may omit any further mention of those pleasures which are inseparable from the use and consumption of the wealth indispensable for the sustenance of healthy life.

*H.* There are, first, the pleasures of acquiring knowledge and skill, and of then directing them to the production and preservation of wealth, sufficient in quantity and wholesome in quality, to satisfy all physical wants; and second, the pleasures of appreciating the pleasures of the future so thoroughly as to outweigh all sense of suffering from enduring present pain, or from foregoing present pleasure for the sake of the greater future

pleasure, which would not otherwise be in store for us ; third, the pleasures of undergoing fatigue, enduring pain, renouncing indulgence, and encountering danger, for the sake of conferring pleasure upon others, or of screening them from harm.

*P.* I shall not urge you, after the example of the missionaries, to abandon the Vedas as a tissue of fables and false doctrines, although it is impossible for me to share your feelings in regard to them, but may I not ask whether the teaching and training of your young, so as to make them seek happiness in the way pointed out by you, would not be more judicious treatment than tying them down to the perusal and re-perusal of the words of your sacred volume ? Would it not render them better able to extract from that volume all that is good, if there really be any good in it, and to avoid misinterpreting and misapplying texts, so as to favour conduct utterly destructive of human happiness ?

*H.* It would. But, as far as we can learn from your missionaries, every word that you have uttered would be equally applicable to the Bible and to their practice of imposing it upon the young.

*P.* Let us both, then, avoid giving in to so gross and dangerous a delusion, as to fancy that any revealed religion can be made a substitute for the cultivation and exercise of the reasoning faculty. However great may be our reverence for any inspired book, even if we were to exaggerate its power of influencing conduct, that influence can only be exercised for good through the reasoning faculty, not by detruding it and occupying its place, and usurping its functions. There is no revealed religion, perhaps there could not be one which, through neglect in cultivating the reasoning faculty, must not be exposed to perversion and desecration by want of capacity in reciting, recording, translating, interpreting, and applying its doctrines. The reasoning faculty stands in need of its highest development to qualify it, to select the one true religion from the many spurious religions which compete for the reverence of mankind.

## ON GOOD AND EVIL.



*H.* TURNING over in our minds the matters discussed in our various conversations, we have been struck with the contrast between the views of human life and duty to which your teachings and the teachings of the missionaries lead. We feel now as if it would be a disgrace in us to lag or to falter in our endeavours to learn how we ought to conduct ourselves, so as to promote, or, at all events, not to impair the general happiness of mankind, to cultivate in ourselves the habit of taking a pleasure in such conduct, and to induce others by our instruction and treatment and example to do the like. But previous to your coming we were strangers to such aspirations. At one time we were frequent listeners to your missionaries. We don't know that we were less anxious then to learn from them, than we are now to learn from you. They disturbed us, they shocked us, but they neither taught us nor put us in the way of learning. They were perpetually contradicting themselves, apparently without intending or knowing it. And when they did anything more than beat the wind, they merely assisted us to a share of their bewilderment. The only difference between us seemed to be, that we were, while they were not, conscious of our own and their bewilderment; and we, accordingly, were on the look-out, while they were not, to obtain extrication and relief. Whenever we fell back upon our Vedas, they urged us to throw off the prejudices which, they said, we began to suck in with our mothers' milk, so that they had obtained a hold over us before the dawn of reason, and to use the eyes and under-

standings which God had given to us. Afterwards, as it appeared to us, they invited, they urged, they all but summoned us, as we valued our immortal souls, to accept the prejudices which they had sucked in with their mothers' milk; foregoing the use of our eyes and understandings, in order to make acceptance possible. At times, of late, they have striven to deter us from inquiry which, they say, may be offensive as well as grateful to God; but we could never squeeze out of them any instructions to enable us to distinguish between the two kinds of inquiry. We never could get nearer to their meaning than that inquiry which led to their own conclusions was grateful to God, while inquiry which exposed their errors, and led to the rejection of their conclusions, was offensive to God. Well do we remember when, on one occasion, they had found us more than usually importunate, that they told us to take warning from the fate of our first parents, who brought sin and death into the world by their hankering after forbidden knowledge.

*P.* You must not suffer yourselves to be set against truth by the silliness of teachers who are unable to explain and apply those portions of their own sacred writings which were evidently addressed to men in the lowest state of ignorance and superstition, on whom neither speech nor writing that was not in the form of fable would make any impression.

*H.* We should be sorry to give in to so grievous an error. But a question has been raised which we hope you will assist us to settle. The suggestion that fable, if not the only form possible, was the one best adapted to make an impression upon men but little raised above the savage state, is plausible enough. But the import of the language through which we were cautioned, let it be ever so fabulous, can scarcely be mistaken. The words in which God's command was conveyed to man when he was placed in the garden of Eden, as read to us by the missionaries, were, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." If this be not



explicit, what follows leaves no doubt of the meaning of him, be he who he may, inspired or uninspired, who spoke the words. For, according to the same authority, when God discovers that Adam had disobeyed his order, He passes sentence as narrated in these verses :—

“And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it : cursed is the ground for thy sake ; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life ;

“Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee ; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field :

“In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground ; for out of it wast thou taken : for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

“And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil ; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever :

“Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.”

From the tone and manner in which these verses were read and commented upon to us, we could not but understand that it was hoped and intended to lead us to believe that God desired to keep man in ignorance of the distinctions between good and evil, and had punished the first man almost immediately after his creation for wishing to learn ; all mankind, at the same time, being doomed to suffer for an act of disobedience, if it were one, in which they had no participation.

*P.* This passage between you and the missionaries ought to act as a confirmation of the truth of what we have already admitted, that intelligence or capacity to form correct judgments is not to be acquired through the reading of books of revelation, but must be acquired independently, so as to qualify man, first, for rejecting spurious revelations, and secondly, for interpreting aright, that is, in accordance with enlightened

notions of the divine attributes, the various words and phrases in which the revelation was supposed to have been made to man. Have you ascertained for certain what things, or acts, or states of being are meant by the words "good" and "evil," the knowledge of which by man is represented as being so distasteful to God? These words are but translations from an older language. Do they convey precisely the same meaning as the original words? Or have men's notions, since the first translations, undergone any alteration concerning what good and evil are?

*H.* We readily admit that these questions ought to have been raised by us before we engaged in controversy, or suffered ourselves to condemn the missionaries so severely as we have done. While we plead guilty to our own inconsiderateness, however, you must allow us to express our surprise that the missionaries, our intended instructors, should have missed their purpose by the loose employment of words with no definite meanings attached to them. Their converts, if they make any, may be mere repeaters of empty sounds while words are used in this way, while their detractors may attribute to them doctrines the farthest removed from their thoughts.

*P.* Postponing awhile the consideration of what may be meant by the words "good" and "evil," as expounded, or left unexpounded by the missionaries, you must have formed to yourselves some meaning to those words. Otherwise, whence such strong feelings concerning the apparently reprehensible doctrines attempted to be enforced through them?

*H.* You will not be surprised to learn, that we have, perhaps without much thought, assumed good and evil to be synonyms for happiness and unhappiness.

*P.* And if good and evil be really synonyms for happiness and unhappiness, would it not be greatly conducive to precision and conciseness of expression, if we were to discard one of these pairs of terms?

*H.* It would certainly.

*P.* My wish is ever to avoid importing into the unavoidable difficulties of any investigation, others that may easily be

avoided, if we will attend carefully to the meanings which we attach to words. With a view to this, I endeavour first to form to myself an accurate conception of things or qualities of things, and then, but not till then, to assign names to them and to classes or collections of them. I propose, then, that we pursue our investigation, keeping clear of the words good and evil till we have found a use for them. We may find occasion for names to designate matters or things not yet touched upon, and good and evil may suit us as well as, or better than, others. When we take note of comparative states of happiness or unhappiness, of states in which pleasure preponderates over pain, or the reverse, do not our thoughts turn as it were inevitably, to the causes which have led to these states, and to the causes which might perpetuate or amend them, according as we feel satisfied with them or otherwise.

*H.* We suppose, with you, that it would scarcely be possible to think of any state of happiness or unhappiness, and not to think at the same time of what led to it, and by what it is likely to be followed.

*P.* We shall do well to get beyond supposition; to make sure of our own thoughts or feelings when we are contemplating states or scenes of happiness or unhappiness. The latter states, especially if in an aggravated form, are sometimes spoken of as states of misery or wretchedness; and they may as well have precedence in engaging our attention. They make the deepest impression upon us at the time. You have had and heard of famines, and perhaps have suffered from one in your time. What have they been caused by?

*H.* The causes of those which have occurred in this country have generally been droughts.

*P.* Among other dreadful scourges which often visit districts in this country are epidemics, such as cholera and influenza. Have you ever been able to trace epidemics to their causes?

*H.* These calamities, by the more thoughtful, are looked upon as a portion of our destiny on earth to be borne with resignation; by the more ignorant and superstitious, they are

held to be manifestations of God's anger, to be averted and mitigated by prayer and penance.

*P.* Are not droughts also imagined to be inflicted upon men by God as punishments for their sins?

*H.* They certainly are; and sufferings from famine are thus aggravated by suffering from fear and from torture self-inflicted, in order to turn away God's wrath.

*P.* Your fertile plains have over and over again been laid waste by foreign invaders, and your forefathers have been subjected to every species of torture, humiliation, and anguish. To what causes do you trace these afflictions?

*H.* We know of but one cause which it much concerns us to point out—our unfortunate inferiority in skill and courage to our invaders. It is not uncommon, we acknowledge, to attribute these and all other calamities to the gods who have been neglected and offended. Curiously enough, our conquerors, who have so intense a hatred and contempt for our gods, or, as they call them, idols, are instigated and led on by their own God, who, if we are to believe them, delights as much as ours in slaughter and rapine.

*P.* Some years ago, your sacred city Benares was a scene of tumult, fury, and desolation. It was at one time doubtful whether the city would not be entirely devastated. The Mohammedans had wantonly destroyed a famous pillar held in great veneration by the Hindoos as Siva's walking-staff. The Hindoos in revenge destroyed a mosque; and then the Mahomedans killed a cow, and poured her blood into a sacred well. Both Hindoos and Mahomedans next turned their arms and fury against each other. The interference of your Christian protectors alone saved the city from the ruin with which it was threatened by its own inhabitants. Can you assign a cause for misery such as this, more sad to contemplate than suffering from famine and pestilence since it seems to be self-inflicted?

*H.* The tone in which you have narrated the celebrated tumult of Benares, and the method of its suppression, makes

us suspect that you attribute the misery occasioned by it to Mahomedan and Hindoo superstition and fanaticism, and the arrest and mitigation of it to Christian interference. You will excuse us for calling your attention to what we have been told has occurred more than once since the time of the Benares tumult in another part of the world. Nothing short of the armed force of the Mahomedans has, at times, been able to prevent two sects of Christians—the Latin and the Greek—from tearing one another to pieces over the tomb of their Christ-God at Jerusalem.

*P.* I had no thoughts of wounding your susceptibilities; and you will forgive me, I am sure, if I have unintentionally done so. We are all apt to slide into expressions which assume a superiority for those with whom we coincide, or to whose ways of thinking and acting we approach most nearly. But my question shall be framed so as to embrace both states of misery, the frantic uproar at Jerusalem, and the furious tumult of Benares. What do you conceive to be the causes of them?

*H.* Human folly and madness.

*P.* It is far from my purpose either to disparage your countrymen or, by implication, to claim superiority for my own. I have chosen my examples from yours as being those with which you would be most conversant. But as it is human misery in general, not Hindoo misery in particular, that we are examining, I will take some examples from Europe. Nearly twenty years ago there was a dreadful famine in Ireland, followed by a pestilence almost as dreadful. You may have heard of these scourges, and thought upon the causes of them?

*H.* We not only heard of them, but we have often cited them when the famines occasional among us have been pointed to as punishments inflicted upon us for our idolatry. Our inclination is to attribute them to the blindness which could lead millions of people to place their reliance almost exclusively upon an article of food which, like the potato, is, from



its perishable nature, unfit for storage so as to supply, from good seasons, the deficiency of bad seasons.

*P.* Your anger against the missionaries ought to be softened by the knowledge that men of their stamp attributed the calamities of Ireland to the wrath of God on account of the tolerant feelings that were springing up among Christians of one denomination for Christians of another. The intercourse between India and England is now so frequent and regular that you are well acquainted with another calamity from which we are just recovering. Half a million of operatives have been deprived of employment and wages by the detention from them of the cotton, upon the continued supply and manufacture of which they were dependent for their maintenance. Subscriptions for their relief flowed in from all quarters, and the more wealthy of your countrymen were not backward in offering their sympathy and contributions. Whence arose this dearth of cotton to spread want and dismay over entire districts?

*H.* From the civil war in North America.

*P.* Let us now turn from the consideration of states of misery, with their causes, to that of states of happiness and their causes. As a contrast to seasons of famine, we have seasons of abundance. Can you point out the causes of them?

*H.* It is not very difficult to do that. They are the industry, intelligence, and skill of man, favoured by fertility of soil and propitious weather.

*P.* As a contrast to states of pestilence and premature mortality, we have states of comparative health and longevity. Is it possible to assign causes for these?

*H.* We can point to some of them. Abundance of wealth and well-selected sites for dwellings, with temperate and judicious use of wealth, implying knowledge of the conditions of healthy existence, and the habit of acting in observance of those conditions. There may be other causes still unknown to us which, when ascertained and applied, will further improve health and extend the duration of life.

*P.* Next, in contrast with war and all its attendant horrors, we have periods of uninterrupted peace and friendly intercourse. To what causes may we attribute the occurrence of such periods?

*H.* To the desire of living on good terms with neighbouring nations, or to the conviction on all sides that the means for defence and resistance are such as to forbid all hopes of successful plunder and conquest.

*P.* And what do you suspect to be the causes of freedom from strife and broils, and from any desire to inflict penance, humiliation and torture either upon self or others, under the notion of doing service to God?

*H.* The principal causes of a state of feeling so essential to the happiness of any community can only be the prevalence of sensible notions in regard to religion, or the disbelief in all those monstrosities which disfigure most religions, coupled with a strong conviction that the proper method of dealing with the more ignorant and superstitious members of the community is not to persecute but to instruct, and only to impose restraints when fanaticism leads to acts dangerous to the peace and happiness of others.

*P.* You will excuse my claiming from you some slight passing tribute of approval to the conduct of your present governors, who have never attempted to interfere forcibly with your religious ceremonies and performances, with the exception of putting a stop to suttees; and they were not finally prohibited till the more intelligent of yourselves were prepared to welcome their legal prohibition. The government has wisely left to the missionaries and others the work of gradually weaning your countrymen from what you will not object to my calling their grosser superstitions.

*H.* We have always contended with our countrymen, and will not conceal from you, that we ought to be grateful to our present governors for the general mildness of their rule, and their evident desire to promote our well-being. We wish we could speak as favourably of your missionaries,

Instead of instructing us, pointing out our mistakes, and encouraging our earnest desire to learn, to inquire, and to examine, they seem wholly intent upon substituting one superstitious practice for another. They scorn our idols and glory in their cross. They are disgusted with our fakirs and reverence their saints and martyrs. While they reproach us with our suttees, they overlook their treatment of witches and heretics. Our Siva is no greater a monster than their God of Battles. Our prayers and humiliations in the midst of famine and pestilence are surpassed in absurdity by their own. And we doubt whether any of the enormities of Hindoo, Parsee, and Mohammedan against one another, frightful as they have been, come up to those which have been perpetrated by each sect and sub-sect of Christians in its turn against others.

*P.* There is undeniably much room for amendment with us all, and self-correction will be a more useful employment than a rigid scrutiny of the misdeeds of others. Having abandoned the more cruel forms of intolerance, let us strive to get rid of that milder form which confines itself to acrimony of expression. But we must not lose sight of the subject upon which we were engaged. We have had examples enough to force upon us the recognition, not only of two states, one of happiness and another of unhappiness, but of the causes which lead to each, and it is in harmony with all our proceedings in regard to language to help ourselves with names to mark the distinctions which we think we have established, and which we may wish further to examine. Now, I will not say that the terms "good" and "evil" have been exclusively appropriated to the causes of happiness and of unhappiness respectively. It is one of our misfortunes that names have often been assigned to objects and to qualities of objects before clear notions have been acquired concerning the subjects to be named. But, however much these words may have been abused, there are no better at our disposal wherewith to designate the causes of happiness and of unhappiness respectively. Using, therefore, the terms good and evil in these

senses, do you think it possible that God could object to man's wishing and attempting to inform himself concerning them?

*H.* It would not be a god, but a monster under that name, who could object to man's striving to obtain a knowledge of the distinctions between good and evil.

*P.* And what would you think of teachers, or of priests claiming to be teachers, who could so far impose upon themselves and deceive others as to misrepresent, or even to countenance others in misrepresenting, God as this monster bent upon deterring man from learning that which is indispensable to enable him to secure anything approaching to a decently comfortable existence?

*H.* Your Christian teachers may be so misled and given to mislead others; but we doubt whether any of our pundits, with all their faults, could be fairly charged with promulgating a doctrine so fatal to human happiness as that all attempts to learn the distinctions between good and evil are displeasing to God.

*P.* May I record it as your conviction that any religion which represses the desire to learn how to distinguish good from evil, in the sense which we have attached to these words, must be a false religion? or that a religion which condemns the knowledge of good and evil, if unmistakably true in all other respects, condemns, under the terms "knowledge of good and evil," something very different from what we understand by them?

*H.* You may. And without contending for the superiority of the Brahminical to the Christian religion, or admitting any inferiority, we readily grant that either must be false or misinterpreted, if it be represented as discouraging or deterring mankind from efforts to learn how to distinguish good from evil.

*P.* Once delivered from all fear of offending God by attempting to learn how to distinguish between good and evil, does it appear to you that men have a difficult task before them?

*H.* Rather interminable than difficult. For that which

may be made the source of never-ending delight ought not to be thought of as difficult. It is a task which seems destined to be handed down uncompleted from generation to generation. Great as the progress is which has been made in it, there can be no doubt that much yet remains to be done; enough to make us suspect that there will be something to be learned to the end of time. What an absurd notion, then, in the face of all our experience, to imagine not only that the knowledge of good and evil by man was displeasing to God, but that it had been mastered by him soon after his creation. At all events, he lost his knowledge very soon after he had acquired it, bequeathing to his descendants the task of learning, just as if he had never eaten of the forbidden fruit.

*P.* Let us now return to our subject, invigorated with the consciousness that we are not to be scared by any religious, or, more properly, irreligious bugbear. You named droughts as evils, being causes of famines. In other regions of the earth, famines are preceded by other states of weather unfavourable to vegetation. If it could be shown that droughts and those other causes of unproductiveness need not also be the causes of famine, would you still characterize them as evils?

*H.* We cannot avoid doing so unless we agree to dismiss wealth from our list of things indispensable to well-being.

*P.* There are occurrences or phenomena looked forward to in the future which, as you know, are calculated upon as certain. By many people they are considered as parts of the order of nature. Some of them are foretold with preciseness and confidence; others less confidently. Some are common to the whole earth, and others to parts of it. There are the successions of light and darkness, and of the seasons, monsoons, dry and wet seasons, storms and calms: each change bringing with it the call for some provision by man, either to secure the comfort, or to guard against the discomfort, derivable from it. Now if man fail to make this provision, and lose enjoyment or incur suffering as a consequence, which



would you consider the evil, the peculiarity of the season, or man's incompetency ?

*H.* We might sometimes consider one, and sometimes the other in fault. Man is neither omnipotent nor omniscient. He can neither foretell everything that is to happen, nor so prepare himself for what is to happen as to derive well-being from it. When he might know but does not, or when, knowing, he might make the proper preparation but does not, we should then say the evil was his ignorance or slothfulness.

*P.* If some of your countrymen were to quit the sunny plains of Hindostan, on which they had basked the greater part of their lives, with little covering except for decency's sake, and were to travel in their ordinary attire to the Himalayas, what evil would they suffer from ?

*H.* They would suffer from cold ; although their suffering would certainly be brought on either by their ignorance or improvidence.

*P.* Or, taking two districts of your country, each subject to occasional droughts, in one of which the inhabitants, with great labour, had supplied themselves with means of irrigation from distant rivers, and had provided tanks and reservoirs to preserve the superabundant water of the rainy season, while in the other the inhabitants took no such precautions ; when you saw plenty smiling upon the first, and famine scowling upon the second, what direction would your thoughts be likely to take ?

*H.* We should not be able to avoid thinking that the good in the destiny of the first was their intelligence and industry ; and the evil in the destiny of the second was their ignorance and sloth.

*P.* Not to take our examples exclusively from your country, I may tell you that, a few centuries ago, throughout the larger part of Europe, famines, and dearths approaching to famine, were of frequent occurrence. Now they are rare, and in some districts have not been experienced for genera-

tions. Nevertheless, it is not known that there has been any marked change in the seasons. But it is known that in modern times great advances have been made by the inhabitants of most parts of Europe in the cultivation of the soil, in the selection and rotation of crops, in the breeding, rearing, and keeping of stock, in the gathering and preserving of harvests, and in the withholding from present consumption wherewithal to provide against deficiencies in the yield of future seasons; not to mention the wider surface from which each district is in the habit of drawing its supplies by means of improved modes of transport. In the face of this evidence would you enumerate unproductive seasons among the evils of life?

*H.* We would not include them among the goods. If not evils, they must be admitted to be constituents of evil.

*P.* There is an option presented to you. You may consider the occasional occurrence of unproductive seasons among the productive, as part of the order of nature, beyond man's control, or as being partly or wholly subject to his control.

*H.* After what you have told us, and what we have observed ourselves, we cannot but admit that the productiveness of seasons is partly under human control, by intelligence and skill in cultivation and judgment in adapting crops to soil and climate. And so far as man has not acquired the capacity to accommodate himself to varieties and vicissitudes of season, the cause of unproductiveness is traceable to himself, and not to seasons. The real evil, accordingly, would be his ignorance and unskilfulness.

*P.* Next, assuming the intermixture of unproductive among productive seasons to be entirely beyond human control, would you in that case say that the unproductive seasons were the causes of the famines which might occur?

*H.* We must say "no" to that question; for if it be true that famine from such causes may be guarded against by economy and by arrangements for drawing the supplies of food for each district from a widely extended surface, famines, when

they occurred, could only be attributed to human extravagance and improvidence.

*P.* One of the most frightful and at the same time noteworthy calamities of modern times was the potato-rot of 1846 in Ireland. The larger half of an entire nation was struck down by famine and by the fever consequent upon it. Could such a calamity as that have been guarded against, think you, and how? The answer to that question must decide whether the recurrence of like calamities is to be awaited with resignation, or to be prepared against by the vigorous adoption of measures for its prevention.

*H.* It is no longer a matter of doubt to us that the calamity might have been prevented, but only by a long course of active measures to impart better qualities to the people—intelligence, at least sufficient to prevent their reliance, to the verge of danger, upon an article of food too perishable to admit of its being stored to supply the deficiency of one season from the superabundance of others, and self-discipline sufficient to make abstinence a source of gratification where the claims of the future recommend it.

*P.* War, warlike preparations, and the consequences of war, stand out from among most other calamities in this respect, that even by the most ignorant they are seen to be inflicted by men upon their fellow-men. Plague, pestilence, and famine were thought to be consequences of God's wrath, to be averted by prayer and fasting. And although war was also supposed to be sometimes instigated by God in his anger, it was clearly visited upon man through man's agency. There are people who laugh at the mere suggestion of the possibility of putting a stop to all war upon earth. They may be wise, but they may also be foolish in their mirth. If, however, it be man's destiny that wars are never to cease, it does not follow that they may not be rendered less frequent. And if better management by man would make them less frequent, to what cause must we attribute their greater frequency?

*H.* To man's mismanagement. It must be confessed, how-

ever, that the belief that war will never cease on earth is not altogether groundless. We cannot foresee when ambition, vindictiveness, anger, fanaticism, and lust of conquest and plunder, the principal if not the only causes of war, will not maintain their hold over some portions of mankind, and urge them to disturb the peace of others.

*P.* Although we have reason to fear that angry passions will long continue to sway mankind, we also have reason to hope that their violence may be diminished, and their prevalence contracted within narrower limits. The spread of intelligence, which we have borne witness to, has always been accompanied by better conduct, which implies milder passions and a better direction to them. But, accepting the continuance of violent passions, to some extent, as part of the order of nature to which we must submit in our times at least, must they necessarily lead to war?

*H.* So we think.

*P.* It might happen, it may be happening, it may have happened, that there is one nation which is rising superior to these misleading passions, which has advanced in intelligence sufficiently to see that its own progress in wealth and well-being will be best forwarded by abstaining from all attempts to conquer or plunder other nations: could such a nation do nothing to protect itself from the predatory attacks of its neighbours, or, better still, to indispose them from making any attempt at aggression?

*H.* It might do a great deal. It might keep itself in a state of preparation to resist invasion. It might do more: it might, by its reputation for pre-eminence in the means of defence, and for courage and skill in handling them, impress upon its neighbours the conviction that defeat and destruction, not glory and plunder, would be the fruits of attempted invasion.

*P.* If, then, a nation thus peacefully disposed, surrounded by other nations bent upon plunder and conquest, were to lack the vigilance and courage indispensable for self-defence and for establishing a reputation for impregnability, could we

justly say that the evil passions of aggressors were the only causes of the wars which might fall upon the peaceful?

*H.* We could not. For, to a nation so circumstanced, of all causes of war, the one most important for them to keep in mind would be their own want of preparation to resist invasion. That cause of war they might hope to remove, whereas other causes of war might be beyond their control.

*P.* And by what means might a nation, greatly in advance of others, best assist in curing its neighbours of their predatory propensities?

*H.* By providing for its own impregnability, and thus deterring others from violating its territory, by its unbroken abstinence from aggression, by the example of its pre-eminence in wealth and well-being, from successful cultivation of the arts of peace; and by the judicious tender of its advice and, in extreme cases, of its assistance, to protect the more peacefully disposed of its neighbours, and to curb the more aggressive.

*P.* It is doubtful whether war is the most frightful of all the evils that man has had to endure at the hands of his fellow-man. Massacres, tortures, and persecutions have been inflicted, not merely by one nation upon another differing from it in religion, language, and customs, but by one sect upon other sects of the same religion—fellow-countrymen and fellow-citizens. Warriors, in the excitement of storm and battle, have recoiled from atrocities which ministers of religion have committed in cold blood, clothed in all the trappings of justice and holiness. The last wild revolt of the sepoy regiments, which brought about their suppression, after they had been led into the most frightful excesses, was aggravated, if not occasioned, by their religious feelings. Would you, on these grounds, be justified in classing religion among the evils which torment mankind? Or would it be good for mankind if religion could be banished from the earth with war, pestilence, and famine?

*H.* But for the impartiality with which you comprise all



forms of religion in your question, we should take umbrage at what we might suspect to be a covert attack upon our own.

*P.* My thoughts, at this time, are far removed from attacks on any religion. I am intent rather upon inducing you to inquire and to decide for yourselves, whether it be not within the compass of man's power to learn how to distinguish between good and evil, independently of any revelation; whether, indeed, man can be competent to judge of the claims to his attention and reverence of the various revelations offered to him till he have attained proficiency, or at least made some progress towards proficiency, in distinguishing good from evil.

*H.* Although we feel that we are but upon the threshold of the inquiry to which you have introduced us, we already see enough to recognize that man must have attained to a considerable height of intelligence, more particularly in his appreciation of good and evil, to be able to make a judicious selection of his religion, out of the vast lot competing for his preference, and to interpret correctly that on which he has fixed his choice. The mere glimmering of this truth it was which made us recur with astonishment to the teachings of your missionaries, who represented God as angry with man, because he had learned this important truth—for important it is to him, since, without the knowledge of it, he would be unable to avoid suffering from evil, or to secure for himself the enjoyment of good.

*P.* Either the teachings of the missionaries must be erroneous, or you must have misconstrued them, or the God which they are recommending to you is, although unperceived by themselves, a God delighting not in good, but in evil; since, not to possess the knowledge of good and evil is to be unable to seek the first and to escape the latter.

*H.* You must excuse us for rejecting, without the slightest hesitation, the whole fable of the fall of man which the missionaries attempted to impose upon us, not only as historical, but as revealed, and therefore indisputable truth.

*P.* While you are prosecuting your present inquiries and studies, you must not allow the vagaries of our missionaries to prejudice you against the Christian or any other religion, the evidences of which are not fairly before you. One of the greatest and most admired of our poets altogether repudiates the character which, according to you, the missionaries strive to affix to the Almighty. He, more consistently and appropriately, reserves it for the enemy of mankind, whom he represents as thus comforting himself after his fall into the lowest depths of hell from the realms of bliss—

“ Evil, be thou my good ; by thee at least  
Divided empire with Heaven’s King I hold,  
By thee, and more than half perhaps will reign ;  
As man ere long, and this new world, shall know.”

*H.* Your poet’s romance, with all its incongruities, is more attractive to us than your missionaries’ revelation. Evil, by which is meant evil to mankind, is by him represented as Satan’s good, while Heaven’s King delights in good to man, although thwarted by the enemy of Himself and man, despite His omnipotence.

*P.* Does it appear to you that a capacity to distinguish between good and evil is likely to be an acquisition of children, or to be reserved for maturer years, after children have been judiciously instructed ?

*H.* It cannot be acquired during childhood. The foundation for its future existence may be laid in childhood, or rather must be laid then, if the capacity is to be acquired at all.

*P.* At what age, then, ought children to be instructed in their religion ?

*H.* Not till they have made some progress in distinguishing good from evil. Not, at all events, till they have learned how to set about applying the test whereby good and evil may be recognized.

*P.* As a different practice is pursued by the Brahmins, who insist upon what they call teaching the Vedas to very young

children, can you rely upon the prevailing belief in the Vedas as any sign of its Divine origin—of its superior title, over every other competing revelation, to be reputed Divine?

*H.* No more than you ought to rely upon any similar sign as a proof of the Divine origin of your Bible.

*P.* You seem dreadfully suspicious that I have a design to force the Bible upon you. I have no such intention. I should be unworthy of your confidence and attention if I were not desirous to withhold no assistance, to omit no suggestion, that may enable you to form a correct judgment for yourselves, upon so momentous a matter as religion, and to escape from the benumbing influence that must have been exercised over you by the imposition upon you of religious instruction, while your powers of judging were still undeveloped.

*H.* Our Brahmins insist that if religious instruction be deferred till after the years of childhood are passed, it will never obtain a firm hold over the understanding, nor govern the conduct.

*P.* Do they not confound two very different things, perhaps unconsciously, when they talk in this fashion? Have we not recognized, over and over again, that the formation of habits ought to be commenced even from infancy? What I now submit for your consideration is, whether instruction in religion, or efforts to impart the capacity to connect the natural with the supernatural, must not necessarily be reserved for maturer years, if success is to be hoped for?

*H.* We begin to see very clearly that the only form in which religious instruction ought to be thought of for infants and children is to lay a solid foundation for its reception, by cultivating good habits and awakening and directing intelligence. A knowledge of good and evil—an acquirement of maturer years—is indispensable to qualify for distinguishing between the attributes of a God deserving of love and reverence, and those of a devil or monster deserving only of fear and abhorrence, whatever epithets of grandeur and excellence may be heaped upon him by his idolators.

*P.* Do the attributes popularly bestowed upon your deity indicate in his worshippers a capacity of distinguishing between good and evil?

*H.* The very reverse. But we should say the same of Mahomedan and Christian worshippers; for although they believe in a good and an evil spirit, in a God and a devil, they affix so many bad qualities to the first, that one sees no room for the intervention of the second. There is no country, as far as we know, in which God is not characterized by his worshippers as liable to be swayed by feelings of anger, revenge, hatred, repentance, jealousy, weariness, and other feelings indicative of human frailty and folly, rather than of Divine strength and wisdom.

*P.* There is another religious or, perhaps you will allow me to say, superstitious practice which exercises a most baneful influence. I am alluding to religious ceremonies, such as those of immersing your idols in the Ganges for the purpose of averting droughts, epidemics, and other causes of suffering. You know that the probable order of occurrences in this world is not to be altered by these means. But is there not another and a stronger reason for objecting to these superstitions, and for pitying the unfortunate creatures who are enslaved by them? Do they not draw off the thoughts from attempts to discover the causes of suffering? Do they not tend to stifle intelligence, and to lead people to resign themselves despondingly to evils which they assume to be part of the inevitable lot of humanity?

*H.* We cannot deny that they do all this. But while your missionaries denounce our practices as superstitious, they summon us not only to concur in their belief as essential to salvation from eternal suffering in a life to come, but to join in prayer, and to observe days of fast and humiliation, as if His ways would be modified any more by their absurd forms of worship than by the idolatry of our countrymen.

*P.* In Europe people have been progressively, for many years, learning to add to their enjoyments and to ward off

causes of anxiety, inconvenience, and suffering. Famines have disappeared, scarcities have been less severe, wounds and sickness have been less fatal and contagious, and epidemics less frequent; and besides, while the thunder-storm has been less destructive, the electric and magnetic forces in which it originates have been brought to contribute to numerous purposes of convenience and enjoyment. Man has learned to use the powers of steam to overcome calms and adverse winds and currents, and to distil fresh water from the salt water of the ocean, where he formerly perished from thirst in his ignorance. Is there not much suffering, however, still endured by man, from which he might be saved by more knowledge?

*H.* How much of the suffering still endured on earth may be removed by increase of knowledge it is impossible to say, but there is no room to doubt of the mass of suffering which might be removed by providing that the knowledge thus far possessed by a few should henceforward be shared by all. Ignorance, where that term means exclusion from knowledge ascertained to be within man's reach, is an avoidable evil. Ignorance, where it means exclusion from knowledge not ascertained to be within man's reach, if an evil at all, cannot be pronounced to be avoidable, till man has made further progress in overcoming it.

*P.* Do you think it possible that the knowledge now possessed by a few can ever be communicated to the whole human family?

*H.* It appears to us quite possible with two reservations, which, as far as you are concerned, would no doubt be understood, if left unmentioned. One is called for by those unfortunate beings who are born imperfectly organized, or who sustain such serious injury, through illness or accident, as to become incapable of applying knowledge when acquired, or even of acquiring it. The other has reference merely to those portions of knowledge which every individual must leave to be cared for by others. With the reservation of those unfortunate beings who must be dependent for protection upon the



intelligence of others, and of those branches of knowledge which each individual may safely be ignorant of, provided they be not neglected by others, we see no hindrance to the communication to all of the knowledge indispensable to all, except the ignorance of adults, and their apathy in imparting knowledge to the rising generation; and these hindrances are removable, if there be but the requisite determination by the favoured few to whom this knowledge is now confined.

*P.* Taking a retrospective glance at all that we have gone over in our investigation into good and evil, in other words, into the causes of human happiness and human misery, do we find any two causes among them to be compared, as regards the extent and intensity of their agency, with knowledge on the one hand, and ignorance on the other?

*H.* If you include with knowledge willingness and capacity to apply it, we should say that it is the most potent of all the causes of happiness under human control, as its opposite, ignorance, is the most potent of all the causes of misery. Understanding by religion something over and above knowledge to promote human happiness, it is inconceivable to us how your countrymen, so unmistakably in advance of our own, as they are in most respects, could send among us, at great trouble and expense, missionaries specially selected to convert us from what they are pleased to call our superstitions, and who can attempt to impose upon us one of their own more wild, more at variance with common sense, more derogatory to the high attributes of the Deity than any which they would uproot—that comprised in their fable of the fall of man on account of his appetite for the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—a fruit forbidden by a God of infinite goodness, and eaten by a being whom a God of infinite power had failed to create incapable of disobeying his commands.

## ON RIGHT AND WRONG.

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*P.* OUR last conversation left us of one mind, thus far : that irrespectively of all religions, it is quite within the bounds of human capacity to attain, if not to a perfect, at all events, to a very considerable knowledge of good and evil, and also of the best means for securing the first and avoiding the second. We seemed, also, to be of one mind, that of all evils, or causes of human misery, there is not one to be compared with ignorance in the number of its victims. Ignorance, as we saw, if it do not cause, omits to prevent, plague, pestilence and famine, and wars and self-torture. But ignorance produces its effects through human conduct—through mistaken action or inaction. Even in those cases where the misconduct of an individual is not attributable to his own ignorance, it may yet be traced to the ignorance of others who did not know how to train him, so as to prevent his acting in opposition to the dictates of his own knowledge. Seeing, then, how much of human happiness depends upon human conduct, can you conceive it possible that men, such as they are recorded to have been, and as we know them to be, should have omitted to take cognizance of different kinds of conduct ; to approve of some and disapprove of others ; to encourage some and discourage others ; to insist upon some and to forbid others ?

*H.* To conceive that men should not have reflected upon the causes and consequences of their own conduct, would be to conceive man organized altogether differently to what he is.

*P.* Viewing man's conduct as a subject of inquiry, of

examination, of reflection, through countless ages, do we appear to you to have groped our way at last to a juster discrimination, to a wiser classification, of the kinds of conduct which ought to be approved and disapproved?

*H.* There are proofs in abundance of the progress that has been made in this respect, mixed up as they are with proofs sadly numerous of the further progress which we have to make.

*P.* Are there not still considerable differences of opinion as to what kinds of conduct ought to be approved and encouraged; and are you forming to yourselves any standard or test by which to guide your own judgments and to increase your powers of persuasion when appealing to the judgments of others?

*H.* There always have been, and still are, considerable differences of opinion as to what kinds of conduct ought to be sanctioned on the one hand, or condemned on the other. The changes that have taken place from age to age, in the same country, and the contrasts presented by different countries, might countenance the suspicion that no unerring test whereby to determine whether conduct ought to be pronounced good or condemned as bad, was to be found. We confess to a leaning towards your views. Our attention having once been called to the method of trying conduct by its tendency to promote or disturb human happiness, we find ourselves compelled to adopt it. We cannot even think of a substitute for it.

*P.* I am not aware that I should be justified in affirming of any countries, even those reputed to be the most advanced, that this principle or test has been universally adopted. But I may say, that wherever progress in well-being is most observable, there also is most observable the practice of judging human conduct according to its tendency to promote well-being. Terms expressive of approbation and disapprobation, in regard to conduct, have not been wanting, although precision in applying them may not have been arrived at. Hence that surplusage of words, without one that can be relied upon, those interminable controversies, those mistakes of others'

meanings and shiftings of one's own. As you have studied our language, you can, I have no doubt, recall many terms in common use, to designate kinds of conduct and disposition liked or approved, as well as kinds disliked or condemned, and the kinds of men in whom these kinds of conduct and disposition are observed.

*H.* Good and bad, just and unjust, wise and foolish, expedient and inexpedient, kind and unkind, mild and strict, lenient and severe, merciful and unmerciful, generous and mean, brave and cowardly, orderly and disorderly, are some that occur to us. But we confess that we should be at a loss to apply them in such a manner as to affix a definite meaning to each.

*P.* You need not attribute this inability of yours to any want of command of our language. The language itself is in fault. It has been constructed before the ideas intended to be named had been clearly mapped out. There have been writers and talkers among us who have attempted to set up distinctions between virtue and religion, wisdom and goodness, justice and expediency, justice and mercy, economy and parsimony, liberty and licence, which are either no more than verbal or actually false. They prefer the just to the expedient, as if justice could ever be inexpedient. They would have justice tempered with mercy, as if justice ever required tempering. They say, let justice take its course, even should ruin follow, as if ruin could ever be a consequence of justice rightly understood and administered. Among the difficulties which prevent our distinguishing between the kinds of conduct favourable and unfavourable to well-being, not the smallest is the habitual use of words which imply classification, without indicating the grounds upon which the classification has been adopted. Would it be agreeable to you, discarding for a time the use of words which imply a decision arrived at, to pass in review different kinds of conduct, and try to classify them according as they seem to us to promote or prevent general well-being or happiness?

*H.* Nothing would delight us more.

*P.* There are two words, "right" and "wrong," which you must often have met with, very commonly used to designate these two kinds of conduct, although, unhappily, not exclusively used for this purpose. In the absence of other words more suitable, may I ask you to adopt these, taking care to avoid continuing to use them, in the belief that their meaning is unchanged, after another signification has been attached to them?

*H.* The want of some such terms would be inconvenient; and as ambiguity might lead to erroneous conclusions, as well as make it difficult to arrive at correct ones, we will endeavour to keep company with you in calling that conduct right which favours well-being, and that wrong which obstructs well-being.

*P.* From having often gone over this ground, I have some tolerably deep-rooted convictions. I think it but fair to give you this caution. Still, further to guard against my attempting to impose my convictions upon you, I propose to leave the task of examining and deciding to you. I shall limit my interference, as much as possible, to the suggestion of varieties of conduct for examination, the classification of which, and the reasons for such classification, will determine the classification of almost all other varieties of conduct that could possibly be submitted for your judgment. We cannot do better than begin with conduct which tends to perpetuate ignorance in self and others—to shut out from oneself or others, the knowledge indispensable for good self-guidance.

*H.* If we have not been mistaken in attributing most of the human misery hitherto observable to ignorance, and in suspecting that more even might be traced to the same source, if we had more knowledge, we cannot but characterize as wrong all conduct which excludes anybody, even oneself, from knowledge.

*P.* At what age do you think that the cultivation of a



desire for learning or for acquiring knowledge ought to be commenced ?

*H.* As early as possible. Perhaps it would be more correct to say, that from the very beginning care should be taken not to discourage or repress the desire in children to inquire, to experiment, to compare, to infer, and to judge; and to assist them in their efforts, so as to enable them to obtain, as nearly as possible, all the knowledge indispensable for the best self-guidance.

*P.* And as this assistance can only be given to them while infants, by their parents or other adults acting as parents, what would you think of the tone of any society in which it was not a prevailing thought that this assistance ought to be given to all the young, and that adults ought to be anxious to qualify themselves to be able to give it effectively.

*H.* We should say it was a wrong tone. And we must confess, although our views upon this subject were not formerly so clear and decided as, thanks to you, they now are, that is the reason why we were scandalized at the denunciation by your missionaries, of our attempts to sift and comprehend what they presented to us : they behaved as though they had expected us to accept it on their authority.

*P.* You must have experience enough of teachers of religion to be aware that they are not accustomed to have their expositions of revelation called in question.

*H.* They are in this dilemma. They come among us to call ours in question. They try to convince us of the contradictions, improbabilities, assumptions, and impossibilities which we have been blind to. They partly affront, and partly unsettle us, but do not put us in a frame of mind to accept unquestioned the chimeras which they attempt to pass off upon us as religious truths. We doubt whether we handle their expositions more unsparingly than they handle ours, unless it be a greater offence to question than to denounce, to examine than to reject, to confute than to condemn. Because we cannot reconcile their various teachings, one with the other,

nor accept them unreconciled, but seek further enlightenment lest we should reject truths hidden from us by our own ignorance, they charge us with captiousness, arrogance, scepticism, self-sufficiency, and intractability. Worse than this, they represent the very God whom they particularly recommend to us as the perfection of goodness and wisdom, as having inflicted condign punishment on the whole human race, because the first man wished to acquire knowledge.

*P.* Is it candid in you to charge the missionaries, and through them the God of their worship, with wishing to discourage knowledge among men in their fallen state, because it was forbidden to man in Paradise?

*H.* If we accuse them wrongfully, the blame must rest with them for explaining themselves so badly. It is not our candour, but their explicitness, which is at fault. If they really believe that their God is as averse to ignorance outside the walls of Paradise as he was to knowledge within, why do they not act in accordance with his understood wishes? Why, having come here, do they attempt to check our inquiries? Why have they come here, leaving behind them so much ignorance, with the suffering inseparable from it?

*P.* It is incumbent upon us not to allow our judgments to be warped, on account of the shortcomings of those who shock our understandings by their distorted representations of truth.

*H.* Nor to close our eyes to the manifold contradictions to which they seem to be insensible. They come, and we are bound to suppose in kindness, to teach us. They wean us from our idols and our idolatrous practices. Thus far we satisfy them. They wish to make known their religion to us, and we are anxious to replace the one which we have discovered to be undeserving of our love and reverence. But the new religion—the object of our present search—must be free from the objections to which we have become sensible in the old. We cannot do otherwise than examine theirs with as much care as we bestowed upon our own before we relaxed

our hold of it. In this very matter of knowledge, in which we find ourselves so deficient, they first leave us in doubt whether human knowledge be acceptable to their God, and then, as if fearful of committing themselves to a doctrine so vile as that which would represent their God as favouring ignorance and its consequences to man, they tell us to seek knowledge through prayer, as if knowledge were to be obtained by prayer any more than by the immersion of an idol in the Ganges.

*P.* As your wish must be rather to satisfy yourselves how best to distinguish between right and wrong, than to squabble with them or to obtain an easy and inglorious triumph over them, I will ask whether you see any reason to fear that religion, or what it is supposed we owe to God, can be inconsistent with a desire to acquire and diffuse knowledge, or with our condemnation of those who, on any pretext whatsoever, strive to perpetuate the ignorance of others, and take no pains to diminish their own?

*H.* So far from that, we are quite prepared to accept as one test for judging the claims of conflicting religions to our preference, the fervour with which each enjoins the acquisition and diffusion of knowledge, and with which each denounces those who uphold ignorance, covertly or overtly, by actively expelling knowledge, or by passively obstructing its acquisition. We cannot say, if Christianity be the true religion which your missionaries proclaim it to be, that it has much to thank them for, judging by their representation of its doctrines as justifying remissness in efforts to banish ignorance from earth.

*P.* Closely allied to ignorance as a cause of human misery is inertness, or indolence, or idleness. In some respects it may be said to be one of the parents of ignorance. But if it were to be found in conjunction with knowledge, it would deprive mankind of most of the blessings which knowledge is capable of assisting them to. I was about to ask for your judgment upon conduct which promoted habits of industry,

and of its opposite—idleness. But I ought, perhaps, first to ascertain whether you think that conduct admits of being classified under the two heads of inducing industrious habits, and inducing idle habits.

*H.* We need not keep you waiting for an answer to that question. All sensible parents are conscious how much they may do to induce habits of industry in their children. Their efforts to accomplish this in behalf of their own children are a tacit admission that neglect of such efforts will give rise to habits of idleness in those children who suffer from it. And neglect of conduct capable of inducing habits of industry, is but another expression for conduct inducing habits of idleness.

*P.* Are you now prepared to pronounce judgment upon these two kinds of conduct?

*H.* It would be strange if we were not. The first is clearly right, and the second as clearly wrong. We cannot but observe the striking contrast between morals as learnt under your guidance, and that confused jumble of contradictory maxims offered for our acceptance by your missionaries. According to the whim or purpose of the moment they will urge us to “learn and labour truly to get our own living,” or rebuke our efforts, quoting from their sacred book: “Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.”

*P.* I have already cautioned you not prematurely to confound real Christianity with missionary Christianity. But let us not be distracted from the work which we have specially proposed to ourselves, the classification of conduct under the heads of right and wrong. We have noted that economy, or a habit of limiting present consumption sufficiently to guard against future want, is a good, *i. e.*, a condition of well-being; and that improvidence, or consumption regardless of future wants, is an evil, *i. e.*, a cause of misery. Is it possible to distinguish between conduct inducing habits of economy and conduct inducing habits of improvidence?

*H.* Of that, again, there can be no doubt. The foundation of either of those habits will be laid in childhood. Upon adults, therefore, it must mainly depend whether children are to grow up in habits of regulating present consumption, careful or neglectful of future wants. For the growth and cultivation of habits of economy through life, there must be intelligence to appreciate their importance, and self-discipline to act upon them, and these presuppose good teaching and training.

*P.* I can hardly be at fault in guessing how you will class conduct inducing habits of economy, and conduct inducing habits of improvidence.

*H.* The first is right; the second wrong. And you must excuse us, but we cannot refrain from again referring to the confusion of doctrines worse even than the "confusion of tongues," inflicted, according to the missionaries, upon the human race by a God of infinite goodness and wisdom. We appreciate their exertions in promoting savings' banks among us, but why should they condemn their good works by giving utterance to such incongruous fragments of doctrine as,—

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal," and "Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself."

*P.* Dwell rather upon the practical interpretation of religion in their works, than upon the vile habit which they have contracted of saying one thing and meaning another, or of indulging in "vain repetitions" which convey no meaning whatever.

*H.* We wish they would devote themselves to good works, and abstain from talk which is only innocent when it is meaningless.

*P.* May it not happen that habits of economy will be overpowered and destroyed, if they be not supported by other agencies besides those of teaching and training?

*H.* Not only may it happen, but history supplies evidence



in abundance to show us how it has happened, and daily experience forces upon our notice the causes perpetually at work to undermine the habits of economy which education has formed and fostered. Every inroad upon earnings and savings, by fraud or violence, must act as an inducement to prepare less for the future, and hence to produce less.

*P.* But do we not look to teaching and training for immunity from violence and fraud, through the formation of habits of respect for person and property, founded upon a sense of the importance of those habits to the well-being of society?

*H.* Ultimately, such immunity may be obtained through teaching and training, and no doubt we are indebted to their agency for much of the partial, and we may say growing, immunity which we enjoy. But while awaiting the ultimate and complete immunity looked forward to by some as obtainable from an education greatly in advance of any now given and brought home to every child, there is need of government protection for person and property.

*P.* Would you object to this exposition of doctrine in regard to person and property—that respect for them ought to be universally cultivated by education, and that protection against those who are wanting in this respect ought to be supplied by government, and by the efforts of individuals in co-operation with those of government officials?

*H.* You seem but to express with accuracy what we have in our thoughts.

*P.* Viewing protection to person and property as indispensable for the preservation and further increase of our store of wealth, and for the happiness to be derived from the peaceful enjoyment of it, you are probably prepared to specify some of the kinds of conduct which ought to be condemned as wrong?

*H.* Murder, or the taking away life, except in self-defence or in obedience to law, rebellion, or resistance to legal authority, theft, burglary, begging with or without imposture, cowardice, and backwardness in supplementing the action of government.

*P.* If those kinds of conduct be wrong, the counterparts of them will be right; such as resistance to attacks by enemies from without, and by depredators from within evading the law under the protection of which they live, and discountenance of those who would obtain their means of subsistence not by intelligent industry, but by beggary.

*H.* The missionaries would have had some chance of making Christians of us, had they explained that such doctrines as these were what they had learned from their Christ. Whereas these are samples of the passages from his teachings which they were in the habit of perpetually reiterating:—

“But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

“And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.

“And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

“Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.”

*P.* And, according to you, the missionaries had not the intelligence and skill to extract from such teachings the rules of conduct which tend to well-being, and the deviations from them which tend to misery: the first of which we call right, and the second wrong.

*H.* Moreover, we doubt the ability of any teachers to deduce rules of right and wrong out of such a mass of wild, confused, and unusable injunctions. The first step to be taken by Christians towards attaining lucidity of exposition in the formation of rules of conduct, in drawing the line between right and wrong, must, it appears to us, be to discard such puzzling and misleading attempts to guide and enlighten, however well-intentioned the projectors may have been who invested them with divine authority.

*P.* I will do no more at present than recommend you to reserve your judgment upon matters not immediately calling

for an irrevocable verdict. Let us not be diverted from pursuing our investigation into the distinctions between right and wrong by the incompetency of the missionaries to separate the chaff from the grain, or the poison from the wholesome nourishment, in what they call religion and endeavour to promulgate under that name. We shall find enough to call for all our acuteness and circumspection to avoid falling into many priestly errors disguised as religious truths. Did you not enumerate, among kinds of wrong conduct, rebellion, or resistance to legal authority?

*H.* We certainly did; but we did not mean that people ought to be condemned for resisting all legal authority, and on all occasions, whether that authority be exercised for their good or not, and whether release from its oppression be obtainable or not by other means. The doctrine of non-resistance thus unqualified might lead to the perpetuation of the most grinding tyranny, and to a system of government capable of transforming a land occupied by a people enjoying abundance of wealth into a jungle occupied principally by wild beasts.

*P.* Have you formed any settled or deliberate opinions as to when resistance to legal authority would be right and when it would be wrong?

*H.* We must confess that we have not. We declined to join in the rebellion which, happily, as we think, for our countrymen, was suppressed a few years ago. But we were not without doubts and misgivings. Many of our Pundits and Brahmins favoured the rebellion. The missionaries, of course, taught otherwise; but they went the whole length of passive resistance. We could obtain no other answer when we applied to them than a reference to their Scriptures, and they read to us the dialogue between Christ and the Pharisees:—

“Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk.

“And they sent unto him their disciples, with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the

way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men.

“Tell us therefore, what thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?”

“But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?”

“Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny.

“And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?”

“They say unto him, Cæsar’s. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.

“When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.”

Surely, however clever Christ’s answer may have been as a rebuke to the Pharisees, the reference to it by the missionaries was rather a frivolous evasion than a serious solution of the difficulty which we submitted to them.

*P.* It is manifest that we must look elsewhere for instruction than to the Brahmins and missionaries. We would neither be misled by false interpretations, nor be satisfied with an evasion. Where shall we look?

*H.* We must rely upon ourselves. We must inquire and reflect; and where, as will happen at times, we have been deceived by false appearances, or been imposed upon by a jingle of words, we must correct our mistakes as fast as we detect them.

*P.* And how can we do better than cultivate and exercise our reasoning faculties and cherish our aspirations for the good and true, in order to fit ourselves for capable investigation, and to fortify ourselves against any ignominious propensity to slur over and push aside difficulties beyond our ability to solve at the moment? Our duty in regard to such difficulties is to acknowledge them, to reserve them as matter for future examination, or to bow before them as proofs that

the human powers are bound down within certain limits. Above all, we must be cautious not to accept as inspiration or revelation the suggestions of an undisciplined intellect, or of an imagination running riot. To return to our subject, is it within the compass of human reason to determine whether rebellion or resistance to established government be ever lawful ; and if it be, under what circumstances ?

*H.* We have heard the word "lawful" used in this way before ; but we should hardly have expected it to be so used by you, except to give you an opportunity for judging of our readiness in detecting an attempt to shift the issue by substituting a new term. If you mean by "lawful" what the word means in its ordinary acceptation, "conformable to the established laws of the country," rebellion must be unlawful. But if you mean by "lawful," "conformable to the will of God, or to the behests of religion, or to the rules of conduct best adapted to promote well-being," the question assumes altogether another form.

*P.* Your criticism upon the misuse of the word "lawful" is most judicious, and is equally applicable to the method of handling many other terms.

*H.* It appears to us that Christians are not very happy in their laws for the observance of the sabbath. And your missionaries, in their ardour for introducing them among us, seem entirely to disregard the teachings of their gospel, which, at other times, they urge us to adopt. Listen to these verses :—

"At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn ; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.

"But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.

"But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him ;

"How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the



shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?

“Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?

“But I say unto you, That in this place is *one* greater than the temple.

“But if ye had known what *this* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

“For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.

“And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue:

“And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him.

“And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?

“How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.

“Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.

“Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.”

*P.* I withdraw the term “lawful,” and ask instead, can rebellion ever be justifiable, that is, conducive to the increase of well-being?—for if it be, we have agreed that it cannot be contrary to religion or to the will of God.

*H.* Our impression is that it can. We hardly know how otherwise men could ever have released themselves from so many frightful despotisms, and cruel and degrading superstitions?

*P.* Is it also your impression that rebellion is justifiable whenever the laws and government of a country can be shown

to work evil, or to deviate from what it is considered would best promote well-being?

*H.* Although that state of laws and government must be part of any justification of revolt or rebellion, it would not suffice alone as a justification. The probability of its success, if attempted, ought not to be disregarded. Neither should other modes of relief from bad or inefficient governments, such as appeals to the intelligence and good feelings of the public, the governing classes included, be overlooked. Failure in rebellion leaves the victims of oppression worse than before. There can scarcely be entire failure in attempts judiciously made to introduce wiser thoughts and conduct among a people, however tardy may be the appearance of any signs of their success.

*P.* In our endeavours to come to a sound judgment upon right and wrong in conduct, such a case as that of rebellion, or of resistance to established authority, difficult of solution as it may be, is admirably adapted to bring into exercise all the thoughts which ought to be at command, even if not called out, for that purpose. We are required not to lose sight of any of the consequences, near or remote, direct or indirect, of what we may be about to engage in. Examined in this spirit, do you think you can set forth in their order the rules of conduct which it is right to observe in reference to "resistance to law or government authority"?

*H.* 1. Obedience to law or government is so indispensable to well-being that, even when partial resistance is excusable, it is impossible, indeed it never has been proposed, to justify resistance to law as a whole. 2. Where the law or government is cruelly oppressive, resistance ought never to be attempted, unless there be good reason to believe that all other efforts to change or amend it would be vain. 3. Even if there be no hope of relief except by rebellion, rebellion should never be attempted unless there be a reasonable prospect of success.

*P.* Do you think that much useful help for guidance is contained in these rules of yours?

*H.* If they do nothing more, they invite attention to the consequences of the line of conduct proposed to be engaged in. They neither sanction passive obedience, a doctrine which excludes hope, nor the disposition to resistance of authority, except as a last resort, and as a reasonable expedient for procuring relief. At all events, they do not pretend to solve a difficult question while they really evade it.

*P.* Thus far our examination has been confined to the conduct of individuals towards governments. We have not touched upon the conduct of governments towards the governed. We also must not lay ourselves open to the imputation of evading difficulties. Government makes itself felt through the acts or conduct of its functionaries—of judges, magistrates, police, and armed forces. By what test are we to judge them, for, I presume, their conduct may be wrong as well as right?

*H.* Government functionaries seem to us to be exceptionally placed. It is their business to administer and to execute the law. If they do that faithfully their conduct is right, otherwise wrong.

*P.* But we have seen that laws may be bad as well as good, obstructive as well as conducive to human well-being. Can we say that the conduct of government functionaries is right if they administer bad laws faithfully?

*H.* We are not so near the solution of our difficulties as we fancied ourselves to be. We dare not answer that question in the affirmative. Although we cannot excuse functionaries who do not administer the law faithfully, we must bear in mind that no man is compelled to accept the post of a functionary under bad laws.

*P.* Would you condemn the conduct of any man who accepted office under a bad government, seeing that it would be incumbent upon him to administer bad laws?

*H.* We incline to that decision, although we confess that we are far from confident.

*P.* You feel, perhaps, that functionaries under bad laws might not be conscious that the laws were bad?

*H.* We should not be much puzzled if that were our only difficulty ; for those functionaries would err unintentionally. If we condemned their conduct, we should condemn it as mistaken—not as wrong. We cannot make up our minds that there might not be circumstances in which functionaries would do right to accept office under a government, which, if not so good as it might be, they could make better by turning their position to account, and to administer bad laws susceptible of great modification for the better by a judicious use of the discretion always allowed to judges.

*P.* And what makes you think that the conduct of such functionaries might be right ?

*H.* Government functionaries could not be qualified for their positions unless they had the intelligence to see some of the defects, if there were any, as well as the merits of the laws which they had to administer. To obtain a rectification of defects might be partly or even wholly beyond their power. Nevertheless, it would not be an advantage, if men best fitted to administer the laws were to decline the duty, because the power of amending the laws was not conferred upon them also. Accordingly, we cannot assert that a refusal to engage in the administration of laws felt to be bad or mistaken must be right, or that they who consent to administer them must be wrong. Laws and government might be so outrageously bad, and so obnoxious to the people at large, that to participate in their administration, or to give the slightest countenance to them, would be utterly indefensible. But when their defects are only the reflection of the general ignorance and mistakes of conduct, intelligent men, by taking part in the administration of the laws, have wider opportunities for enlightening the people, and hence of preparing the way for improved laws, and also of mitigating the bad effects of the laws while unimproved.

*P.* In conducting an inquiry into right and wrong in the conduct of government functionaries, and in arranging our own thoughts upon the subject, does it appear to you that our

judgments should be founded upon the laws as we find them established, or that our judgments upon the laws themselves should first be formed, based, as they must be, upon our previous judgments of right and wrong in conduct in general?

*H.* The judgment upon right and wrong in general must precede judgment upon right and wrong in laws and the administration of laws. We should, perhaps, express our thoughts more clearly by saying that a just appreciation of the test by which right and wrong are to be distinguished, and a readiness in applying it, as examples of conduct are brought before us, qualify us for forming judgments upon laws and administrators of law also. Obedience to law may be enumerated among the conditions of well-being. Where laws are ill adapted for their purpose, but ill adapted only on account of the low state of civilization of the people, not to administer them faithfully while seeking their amendment would be wrong. In those rare cases where laws are bad in opposition to the wishes and intelligence of the people, to sanction them by assisting in their administration would be wrong; and to rebel against them would be right, understanding, of course, that success was probable, and that legal efforts to obtain redress would be vain.

*P.* Are there not other resources besides those of law and government for enforcing right conduct upon people whom teaching and training have failed to impress?

*H.* We know of no others, except the influences of religion, and these, as we begin to suspect, it is not easy to separate from the influences of superstition.

*P.* Nevertheless, the separation is of sufficient importance to forbid our omitting any attempt to make it. Have we not already struck upon a line of thought likely to assist us, and even to inspire us with some hope of arriving at a favourable result?

*H.* History and observation combined supply us with so many irreconcilable beliefs, practices, and ceremonials which have passed and still pass current under the name of religion,



that, at least, we have examples enough to exercise our wits upon, in order to discriminate which among them all deserve to be accepted as religion.

*P.* Has the tendency of them all been to promote human well-being?

*H.* Neither you nor we can hesitate to admit that many of them have had quite an opposite tendency. Witness our suttees, idol-worship, fasts, and attempts to please God by debasement of self and estrangement from others, and your long and vain repetitions, under the idea of turning the Lord of the universe from his purpose, your imputations upon his wisdom, your invocation of his wrath upon those who differ from you in some trifling observances, your acceptance of the doctrine that hosts of your fellow-creatures are doomed to eternal suffering, while your judges are declaring ever and anon that the very worst of your criminals may escape this atrocious infliction if they do but rely without faltering upon him whom they call Jesus.

*P.* You might be a little more forbearing in your tone, seeing that, except so far as is necessary for complying with your request, I avoid attacking what I may think superstitions in your countrymen, or upholding the misconceptions of religion which the missionaries have attempted to impose upon you. As you admit that it has not been the tendency of all that goes by the name of religion to promote human well-being, can we derive from that fact any guidance to assist us in distinguishing the true from the false?

*H.* We are quite prepared to admit that nothing which tends to diminish well-being deserves to be retained among religions.

*P.* Is not religion supposed to aim at something more than the promotion of human well-being?

*H.* It embraces the service of God as well as the service of man. But there is no antagonism between the two, if each be rightly understood. The notion of serving God by inflicting evil on man may be accepted as religion by a horde of

savages; it can only be regarded as a horrible superstition by civilized men.

*P.* Our mutual understanding upon this point facilitates and simplifies our investigation. It enables us to confine our attention to religion as a means of promoting human well-being, assured that inasmuch as it promotes human well-being, so far also God's wishes will not be disobeyed. Are you prepared now to characterize the conduct of men who preach or promulgate under the name of religion doctrines which justify and promote human debasement and misery?

*H.* We are quite prepared to characterize it as wrong. As in other cases, it may be wrong intentionally or unintentionally. It may be the conduct of a villain and a hypocrite, or of a victim of ignorance and superstition.

*P.* In judging of conduct and religion, does it appear to you that religion assists us to a correct judgment of conduct, or that the capacity to distinguish right from wrong conduct is an essential element of the capacity for distinguishing religion from superstition—the true from the false, in what is offered as homage by man to God?

*H.* Without the capacity to distinguish right from wrong conduct, a sound judgment upon religion must be impossible. Although the two are inseparable, a knowledge of right and wrong must take precedence of a just appreciation of religion.

*P.* All our inquiries into religion and conduct converge to the conclusion that it is within the capacity of man to attain to a knowledge of what is right and wrong in the second, and true and false in the first; and that well-being will be increased progressively with the increase of this knowledge, provided conduct be brought to conform to it. Is it to the want of this knowledge, then, that you would attribute the wide-spread misery observable in the world? or can you trace it to any other causes not yet noticed by us?

*H.* We attribute it mainly to the want of this knowledge, and for the reasons which we have gone over together. Whether any and what part of it is to be assigned to other

causes, can only be determined after this knowledge has been engrafted upon the whole human race.

*P.* If there be hindrances in the way of engrafting this knowledge, shall we do full justice to our subject, if our inquiry stops at the recognition of the importance of this knowledge and of the sad effects of a want of it, and does not go forward to the investigation of the nature of these hindrances?

*H.* Scarcely. For if our inquiry stop there it will be comparatively fruitless. We must know what these hindrances are before they can be removed, if they be removable.

*P.* In lands conspicuous for the misery which prevails in them, where are we to look for the men capable of rooting out ignorance and superstition, and of planting knowledge and religion in their place?

*H.* The best instructed and the best conducted men must be our main reliance for imparting the knowledge hitherto wanting.

*P.* If you or I were to fix upon the best instructed and best conducted men known to us, and could meet with many more sharing in our views to assist us, would our services as instructors of mankind be generally acceptable or accepted?

*H.* We fear not.

*P.* And why would they not?

*H.* Because your views upon the best mode of instructing and guiding those who require instruction and guidance, are not generally thought to be most likely, if acted upon, to benefit society. Perhaps we might say, because most people are content to persist, as far as education is concerned, in a beaten track, giving little thought as to whether they are pursuing a course as well adapted as possible to promote intelligence and good conduct, or whether, perchance, their exertions may not be producing effects quite the opposite of what they long for.

*P.* Acknowledging, as we do, how wrong it is to deny to the young that teaching which will enable them to distinguish

right from wrong, and that training which will dispose them to adopt the right and avoid the wrong in their conduct, can nothing be done to induce people not to persist in this wrong?

*H.* Unless we be mistaken, persistence in this wrong is attributable to the prevailing ignorance and consequent misdirection of effort of those who have the control of education, the only cure for which is what you and the like of you are attempting.

*P.* Might not some authority be established, under which measures would be taken to secure education for all, and also to make sure that the education should be of the best sort?

*H.* We can readily conceive that measures might be devised to give education to all, but the character of the education could only be, if under authority, what the prevailing opinion would sanction.

*P.* Education would, by such means, be imparted to everybody; and seeing how many all over the earth are now excluded from its benefit, would not a grand step be made towards reducing the extent of misery still abiding among us?

*H.* There would be one evil to be apprehended from an education under authority—the shutting out of improvement, while assisting all to share in the advantages of past knowledge and its applications, subject, of course, to the drawbacks from the prejudices, superstitions, and malpractices combined with them.

*P.* And while education is left free, which means while people are at liberty to deny education to the young, and to pass off upon them, under that name, the deleterious stuff which we too often see, have we more reason to hope for the further improvement so much needed?

*H.* We have this hope, that, by the active exertions of the few to whom advances in knowledge and method must be confined in the first instance, these improvements may be introduced into our schools and kept before the eyes of the public at large.

*P.* What frame of mind must the public be in to tolerate the exertions of the more intelligent among them to teach in the schools and to expound their doctrines?

*H.* A tolerant frame, of course.

*P.* And how is a tolerant frame of mind to be expected among ignorant people?

*H.* It is not to be reasonably expected among a people sunk in the lowest depths of ignorance, or even but slightly raised above them. But among a people who have made some progress in knowledge, and have shaken off the debasing influence of some of the grosser superstitions, it is by no means inconceivable that they should rise to the consciousness that their further progress and improvement might greatly depend upon the tolerant spirit with which they welcome the new truths, and exposures of errors hitherto received as truths, brought to their notice, and submitted to their judgment.

*P.* Herein is our hope for the rapid progress henceforward of mankind in intelligence, conduct, and well-being. Their experience of the successive stages of progress which they have passed, has convinced, or, at all events, is convincing them, that as they have been compelled to relinquish old errors accepted as truths, in order to gain a hold of the new truths now in their possession, so if they would not be shut out from all further advances in knowledge, they must be prepared to surrender prejudices which they may be still unconsciously clinging to as truths. How can we but shudder at the thought of what the present condition of the human race would be, if the ignorant majority had been able to crush the efforts of the inquiring, reasoning, and enterprising few, who first suspected and discovered that their own stage of progress was not the last, and then promulgated their views for the benefit of others? How can we but be deeply impressed with the importance of cultivating a tolerant spirit, and of spreading abroad a sense of the duty of welcoming all attempts to introduce new truths, and to expose errors disguised in the form of truth?



*H.* The conclusion is irresistible, that all attempts to repress or discourage the spirit of inquiry, and the inclination to impart the fruits of inquiry, sound or unsound, and to promulgate new doctrines, true or mistaken, must be wrong. On the other hand, however abundant may be the crop of erroneous and untenable doctrines consequent upon the endeavours to bring forth and disseminate new truths, it must be right to encourage to the utmost the spirit which moves to them.

*P.* The capacity to make this last distinction between right and wrong seems to have been, or perhaps I ought to say, seems to be, reserved for a much later period of man's history than the capacity of making the former distinctions which we have talked over. Is it enjoyed, think you, by your most highly instructed Pundits and Brahmins?

*H.* You have taunted us more than once with our indisposition to leave your missionaries in peace. Surely we might ask you equally to dismiss from your thoughts a class of men so obviously behind you in grasp of mind and skill in detecting contradictions and absurdities.

*P.* My excuse is the fear lest our speculations should lack the weight which is due to them, if they be not tested by application to events of daily occurrence, and to scenes passing under our very eyes.

*H.* Then, as we have all but shaken off the Pundits and Brahmins, we would rather have the truth of our speculations tested by the doctrines and conduct of your missionaries, and, as far as we can get at them, of the Church to which they profess allegiance.

*P.* I will yield to your wishes. If you prefer truth to Pundits and Brahmins, whatever my attachment may be to missionaries and priests of all denominations, it ought to be subordinate to my greater attachment to truth and goodness. Have you had any proofs lately of the missionary state of mind in regard to the search after new truths, and to the scrutiny into the evidences on which doctrines brought forward as true are said to be based?

*H.* Some proofs as little flattering to the missionaries as any that you could adduce against our Brahmins. After having done their best to awaken us to an apprehension of the superstitions in which we had been nurtured, they denounce and threaten us because we examine their religious tenets with the earnest desire to learn new truths, and escape the pain of being again obliged to renounce doctrines after having accepted them. They have chided us as presumptuous, perverse, unbelieving, intractable, disputatious, and, finally, when we declined to disavow our own conscientious convictions, they charged us with blaspheming against their "Holy Ghost," turning upon us some passages out of their sacred writings, which, by-the-by, are represented to be the words of one who came to die for mankind, and to save them from the wrath of a God of infinite goodness :—

"Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men : but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

"And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him ; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."

*P.* It must be admitted that the missionaries, by their conduct, have failed to impress you with the conviction that their religion favours a conscientious seeking after truth, or that, as a preparation for rejecting superstition and accepting religion in its place, you cannot be in a more hopeful state of mind than to be intent upon seeking for truth above all things.

*H.* We imagine that thoughts of seeking truth above all things cannot be very familiar to Christian priests. Or, if they are, it must be a point of faith and duty to suppress them. At one time we were led into the belief that they were encouraging us to seek for truth, but they undeceived us the moment that our search brought us to differ from them. We then found that all search was censurable which did not

end in the acceptance of their conclusions, and that the only way to escape their wrath, while conscious of dissenting from them, is to simulate concurrence and to affirm untruths.

*P.* It would greatly horrify the well-meaning folks, at whose expense the missionaries sent among you were fitted out, to learn from you that the fruits of their expenditure are to make the mass of your countrymen cling with a stronger faith to the superstitions of their fathers, and of the intelligent few to make the unscrupulous "professing Christians" and the scrupulous, to use their own word, "infidels," either divested of belief in the supernatural, or unimpressed with any belief in what they consider "essential to salvation."

*H.* We ought to rejoice that their disapproval of our wandering from them in search of truth is so harmless to us in comparison with what it is to those who wander within the precincts of their own faith. If the reports from the west be not grossly exaggerated, we are bound to believe that while all your priests belie, in their lives, the doctrines which they preach, and are perpetually giving expression to doctrines which either they do not understand or cannot explain if they do; no sooner does any one of their order evince a sensitiveness to the scandal, to the dishonesty, to the hollowness of persisting in such a course, than he is doomed for sacrifice by his clerical brethren, unless indeed their impotency, and the growing intelligence of the age, will enable him to despise their virulence, or to obtain shelter from it. We will not venture to pronounce what the Christian religion really teaches, but we cannot hesitate to affirm that its priests are the most unpromising foes to all who are earnest in seeking truth, and are honest and courageous in avowing it. Experience has unfolded to us how slowly the truths which are now in our possession have been mastered by us; how they have come to us through the successive displacements of errors mistaken for truths; and how each generation, in its search for truth, has had to abandon ancestral prejudices and superstitions. We have agreed that it is wrong to discourage, directly or in-

directly, a regard for truth; that it is right to invite, to awaken, to stimulate, to direct, to accompany, according to circumstances, all who cross our path in life, so that if possible they may not stray from the truth. Mark the contrast as exemplified in the conduct of your priests in dealing with each generation as it is presented to them. Not only do they prepare mental shackles for the infant from the hour of his birth, but they bespeak godfathers, or, as we would call them gaolers, to undertake that he shall not depart from the errors of his fathers. When approaching manhood, well crammed with other people's thoughts, unpractised in the exercise of his own, and impressed either with a sense of the disgrace of doubting and dissenting, or degraded to a state of indifference as to the meaning of the words which he utters, he promises to abide as he is. Should he become a priest, woe be to him if, while he inculcates and expounds Christianity to others, he dare to deviate from the received interpretation of Christian faith as imposed upon him. In vain he will claim to be still a Christian, still a priest, and to be intent only on removing blemishes, and explaining apparent contradictions and correcting misrepresentations. He is met by the cry, "You are not a Christian, not a priest, not a scholar, not an honest man, but a reprobate, and a disgrace to your Church and order." Scoffers look on, meanwhile, expressing their surprise that a man should be so blind as not to perceive that many of those who denounce him are as well aware as he is of the absurdities which he thinks he has discovered, only they are wise enough not to sacrifice the perquisites of adhering to error for the glory of divulging the truth; while others are so crippled in understanding, by the frightful ordeal through which they have had to pass, that all capacity for distinguishing true from false, coherent from incoherent, relevant from irrelevant, right from wrong, has been obliterated in them.

## ON THE PAST, THE PRESENT, AND THE FUTURE.

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*P.* AFTER the careful consideration which we have bestowed upon the distinction between right and wrong in human conduct, does it appear to you that we have succeeded in tracing the boundary line of their separation, or in indicating the point where one melts into the other ?

*H.* It appears to us that we have. The thought being once hit upon, that conduct is to be pronounced right or wrong according as it tends to increase or to diminish the general well-being, little remains to be done except to apply this test when examples of conduct are brought before us for our judgments.

*P.* Have you no misgivings that, owing to the infirmity of human judgment, you must be quite unequal to distinguish clearly between right and wrong, unless assisted and enlightened out of the Vedas, and your other sacred books ?

*H.* From what we know of the Vedas, and other books said to contain revelations from God, we hold them to be better adapted for exercising the powers of judgment in their maturity than for bringing them to maturity. Once possessed of a test whereby to judge of conduct, no exercise of the understanding can be so satisfactory as to apply that test to each case as it arises. The exercise will always be improving, even on those rare occasions where it is not followed by immediate success. To know that a decision has not been arrived at, if not a judgment in itself, is a step towards one. A decision deferred will lead to a correct future decision, if one be possible ; while an immediate decision, not justified by



evidence, might retard a correct one indefinitely, or prevent it altogether.

*P.* You must not overlook that what you say of this test is precisely what is said of revelation by those who enjoin us to look to it for instruction how to distinguish right from wrong.

*H.* The difference between the two tests of "conduciveness to human well-being" and "conformity with revelation" is, that while the one of our choice is of universal application, the other varies with every clime and country. Not only are there numerous revelations, the votaries of each of which are unsparing in the expressions of contempt, scorn, and detestation which they shower upon others; but the interpretation of each, especially of the Christian, has given rise to more dissensions, to bitterer persecutions, to viler slanders, to more false accusations, to fouler murders and massacres among different sects of the same religion, than are recorded of any opposing religions. If, then, we were to relinquish that universal test, we should be at a loss to discover which revelation to consult, or, if we could make that discovery, which interpretation to rely upon. Our perplexity, besides, would be all the greater when thinking over the shifting and conflicting and disputed judgments of conduct, each said to be indisputably derived from revelation.

*P.* You must not be unjust to the religionists with whom you disagree. May not the altered judgments of which you speak be consequences of the growing intelligence of interpreters rather than of any obscurity in the revelations to be interpreted? May not revelation be like the solar system itself, the same now that it ever was, as far as man's knowledge extends, and yet how changed, and perpetually changing, from what it was thought to be? Would you not have had similar discrepancies, if man from the very beginning had been accustomed to judge of right and wrong by your newly-found test? Would there have been no controversies as to what really constitutes general well-being, as well as to the means of promoting it?

*H.* If, as may be gathered from all experience, men have to work their way, through successive generations, from each lower to a higher stage towards perfection, different, although clearer, conceptions of well-being, and also of the means of promoting it, must be conditions of this progress. But surely an additional cause of confusion and contention is introduced, if, instead of steadily aiming at the general well-being, however imperfectly understood, men strive for something besides. It is this something besides which religion has led them to strive for : the approbation of God, eternal bliss after death, with or without transmigration, or purgatory, or an atonement, or the intercession of saints. Had it so happened that the personal gratification coveted after death had always been striven for by efforts to promote the general well-being, fewer difficulties would have crossed us while inquiring into distinctions between right and wrong. But, unfortunately, God's favour and everlasting happiness have been sought by self-humiliation, vilification, and mutilation, and, worse than that, by the infliction of every species of evil upon other men—by massacre, torture, confiscation, plunder, and defamation.

*P.* Your reflections upon revealed religion, as hitherto interpreted, lead you to the conclusion that it rather turns us away from, than guides us to, a knowledge of right and wrong, and prevents the most useful application of our knowledge, after we have acquired it. But whether your conclusion be warranted or not, can we fail to be conscious of how much we yet have to learn in order to perpetuate the well-being to which the more advanced communities have attained, to bring other nations to participate in it, and to procure those additions of which it is clearly susceptible, and those further additions which may not unreasonably be expected?

*H.* The perpetuation of the highest state of well-being yet arrived at, and the communication of it to all those individuals and communities which have hitherto been debarred from it, cannot be accomplished unless education in the most perfect form known to us be sustained, and also be imparted to all,

instead of being confined, as now, to a few. A higher state of well-being is only to be arrived at through increase of knowledge, and increase of capacity for applying it.

*P.* Is there not some reason for fearing lest in striving to maintain knowledge as we have been accustomed to regard it, by the methods hitherto pursued, we should rather retard than accelerate further improvements?

*H.* Your question almost implies a withdrawal of confidence in conclusions formerly assented to. We cannot see how existing knowledge can disincline those who are so fortunate as to possess it from exertions to seek and acquire additions to it. Every new step in knowledge must spring from some preceding step, but for which people would be incompetent to make the new one.

*P.* Granting that no existing knowledge can be fairly represented as an impediment in the way of future advances in knowledge, can we say as much of existing methods of imparting and acquiring knowledge? Do you not consider your Brahmins and Pundits the most highly educated of your countrymen, and do you imagine that many of them would be inclined to enter upon the investigations which you are now pursuing, and which have interested you so deeply?

*H.* No doubt we should be greatly surprised to see them taking a part in our conversation with you. Their disinclination to depart from their accustomed course of studies may partly arise from the system under which they were taught, and partly from the matter taught to them as knowledge. Some acquirements, perhaps, act more than others as incentives to make further acquirements. There is something in all this which we can neither see into nor out of.

*P.* You have seen occasionally in your river the junks of your Eastern neighbours, the Chinese. As you know, for all purposes of trade and navigation, they are as inferior to our vessels as your common roads, with the horses and elephants upon them, are to the railroads and locomotives which we have introduced among you. A time was when their junks were as

superior to our choicest vessels as our finest steamers now are to their junks. If tradition may for once be relied upon, the shipwright who constructed the first of the kind of junks now in use was considered to have done far more than surpass all previous constructions. He was considered to have attained the perfection of naval architecture. Henceforward, it was decreed, let no man be so presumptuous as to fancy that he can improve upon such excellence, and let this junk be preserved as the model upon which all future junks are to be built. Can you not understand how a nation greatly in advance of other nations as ship-builders, having stumbled against the illusion that they had attained perfection, and could do no better than imitate what they mistook for perfection, should be out-stripped by the Europeans who, far in their rear, and starting long after them, never thought of any one of their improvements but as a stepping-stone to others?

*H.* There can be no question, judging by the evidence which has been preserved to us of the progress of every nation, that no stage of perfection has ever been attained which would not have been dearly purchased at any price, however small, with the condition attached to it of rising no higher.

*P.* When we recognize that men must know how to conduct themselves—that is, must acquire knowledge and the ability of applying it—in order to enjoy a state of well-being, ought we not to be careful to comprise under these expressions the *capacity of advancing* in knowledge and in ability to apply it?

*H.* Not to do so would betray an indifference to improvement upon our present state of existence, which its excellence, compared with the greater to be reasonably hoped for, by no means warrants.

*P.* As correct readings and appreciations of the past must form the ground-work of correct anticipations for the future, let us ascertain what these readings and appreciations are, and how far we are of one mind in regard to them. In some parts of the earth there are tribes to be found destitute of anything that we could dignify with the name of knowledge, and of all

the well-being dependent upon knowledge. And, according to records quite trustworthy, there are some parts of the earth in which men have grown out of a state of very great ignorance to the possession of all modern knowledge, and some in which races superior in knowledge have supplanted inferior races; and also, other parts in which the inhabitants have retrograded in well-being, not so much from having retrograded in knowledge, as from deficiencies both in the character of their knowledge and in their capacity of using it, plainly perceptible to modern eyes to be fatal to the permanence of well-being attained, and still more fatal to its further development. To one possessed of little more than eyes, ears, and memory, the appearance of the present condition of the earth's inhabitants, and the records of their past condition, might be subjects of wonder, like other unexplained phenomena; but to men practised in observing and examining, an order of sequence is traceable in the changes recorded, and causes of the differences in the prevailing states of well-being are visible. May I not appeal to you to bear me out in what I am stating?

*H.* It would be little to our credit if you could not. A survey of all history, and of the present condition of the human race all over the earth, as far as our knowledge extends, leads us to the conviction that, on the whole, in spite of the many instances to the contrary, there has been a considerable advance in well-being. We think you will not disagree with us if we say that there are nations or communities enjoying at this time a much more comfortable state of existence than ever was enjoyed before, and not one, perhaps, doomed to put up with a worse.

*P.* So far from disagreeing, I heartily concur with you; bearing steadily in mind, at the same time, that there is no state of well-being yet attained by any community or nation of which there is not the clearest evidence that it is susceptible of great improvement, by means of improved conduct. And when I append this caution to your statement, I am not reckoning upon those improvements which you and I both



anticipate from advances in knowledge, but simply upon the more general diffusion of the knowledge already possessed by some, and upon the better application of it. Does it not greatly concern us to extract, if we can, from our experience of the past and present, how the highest state of well-being hitherto known on earth has been arrived at, how it may be maintained and diffused, and how the increase of which it is seen to be susceptible may be promoted?

*H.* We can hardly conceive a more interesting, useful, and improving inquiry.

*P.* You will not misconstrue my motives, nor accuse me of national vanity, if I fix upon Western Europe as the part of the earth where the state of well-being is more advanced than elsewhere. To what would you attribute the superiority of the inhabitants in this respect over the inhabitants of other regions, and over their own ancestors in the same regions?

*H.* Principally to their superiority in knowledge, and in capacity of applying it; which latter, in its widest signification, embraces conduct in general.

*P.* It may be necessary that many more things than we can enumerate should conspire to secure the permanence of this state of well-being; but what may we confidently affirm must not be omitted to be done to make it secure?

*H.* Existing knowledge and conduct equally well adapted to secure the effective use of this knowledge must be maintained; or, to express the same thought more appropriately, must be imparted by one generation to another.

*P.* There can scarcely be a doubt that, in order to maintain any state of well-being, the knowledge, and capacity to apply the knowledge, which have upheld such well-being, must be imparted by one generation to another. History has taught us, however, that it is not only possible for nations and communities to lose their hold of well-being previously enjoyed, but to be resting in their supposed perfection, while other nations have shot so far ahead as to enjoy a state of well-being compared with which the other looks like a state of misery.

How is the danger of standing still in an imperfect state of well-being, or of sticking fast in a comparative state of misery, to be averted?

*H.* Each generation, while handing down its own knowledge and capacity, must be careful to impart with them the conviction that, as their knowledge and capacity were the fruits of a succession of additions and improvements, starting from ignorance and incapacity, so the fruits now enjoyed bear within them the seeds of the more perfect fruits to come, provided the people who enjoy the fruit have the intelligence to recognize the seeds and to cultivate them.

*P.* If some hundreds or thousands of years ago, there had been one nation or community inspired with your sentiments, would not the people of the earth be in the enjoyment of a higher state of well-being? If there were one such nation now, would not the prospects of the human race be brighter than we can now venture to paint them?

*H.* We cannot conceive how men in the lowest depths of ignorance could have been inspired with such sentiments. We fear that comparatively few have risen sufficiently above those depths even now to be inspired with them. What might have been, or what would be in the future, if things had been different, we know not. What we are anxious to learn, and what with your help we hope to learn, is how best to manage with things as they are. Our race, as far as we can learn from history, has risen to what it is from a state of ignorance, incapacity, and misdirection of effort. It has risen, not by a succession of easy stages, but through ups and downs, forwards and backwards, zig-zag, at one time frightened away from the right course, at another seduced into a wrong one, and often standing still in bewilderment. Here and there we begin to see signs of better progress, as if some, like you, were possessed of the means of guiding themselves and instructing others, and were disposed to place their superior attainments at the service of others.

*P.* And it is peculiarly incumbent upon me, at the present

stage of our inquiry, to be cautious, while opening to you the path which leads to the knowledge and capacity so far acquired, not to close upon you the path to the further knowledge and capacity that may yet be in reserve for mankind. My reliance for guarding against this danger is to keep alive the spirit of inquiry, to make learners active investigators, not passive recipients of that which they consider themselves entitled to call their own knowledge when acquired. When we compare men in their savage state with those who compose our more advanced nations, do they not strike us to be so devoid of certain qualities and attainments as to incline us almost to exclude them from the rank of human beings?

*H.* They do. There are, we are told, men yet to be found who are not possessed of a language; and many who are quite unacquainted with visible signs or symbols wherewith to communicate with one another, and to record and compute. Their memories, accordingly, are little more than the memories of other animals, and their capacities little beyond those of instinct.

*P.* Is it conceivable that men so devoid of capacity could have made any progress in tilling the ground, taming and rearing cattle, weaving cloth, making tools, and building houses, to say nothing of those grander works which have been executed for the first time in our age?

*H.* Not by us. The keeping of flocks and herds could scarcely fail to be preceded or accompanied by some rude attempts at communicating by articulate sounds and at computing and recording.

*P.* Can we be mistaken in affirming that the ability to communicate by vocal and visible symbols, and to compute and record, is indispensable for much progress in knowledge?

*H.* Language, spoken and written, arithmetic and history, are not to be dispensed with, if each generation is to have the opportunity of acquiring the attainments of its predecessors, so as to start with the capacity and the leisure for pushing on to additional attainments.

*P.* May we then include the possession of these portions of knowledge among the attainments which each generation ought to impart to its successor?

*H.* We may, and in doing so, we shall be in accordance with universal practice, so far as education has been attended to. Education has too often been neglected altogether; but, where it has been given, instruction in reading, writing, arithmetic and history has always been included or meant to be included in it.

*P.* You said that you could hardly conceive much progress to be made in pastoral life without the possession of these attainments in some form, however elementary. Can you conceive the possession of these attainments in considerable perfection without a very wide range of other kinds of knowledge, say, for example, of agriculture, of mechanics, of navigation, of engineering, of astronomy, of chemistry, of electricity, and of physiology?

*H.* It would be strange if we could not, seeing it to be on record that a high state of perfection in these attainments had been reached among many nations more than 2,000 years ago, while the branches of knowledge to which you have referred cannot be traced back for a century, if we are to think of them as they are understood and applied at the present day.

*P.* The statement which you have just made strikes me as being of very great significance. It indicates that men may remain in ignorance of many subjects, a knowledge of which is now considered indispensable for well-being, long after language spoken and written, and the power of recording and computing, have been in familiar use among them. Must there not be some marked characteristics whereby to distinguish these items of knowledge from the others, without which man could not have reached his present stage of power and well-being?

*H.* There is one distinction which nobody could well miss. Language and computation may rather be called the instruments of knowledge than knowledge proper.

*P.* Would not this attempt of yours to exclude reading, writing, and arithmetic from among the branches of knowledge sound very strange to those who almost contend that instruction should be confined, as regards the greater number of children, to what they call those "branches of knowledge"?

*H.* It might, and yet the exclusion might not be the less desirable. We labour under a disadvantage from the ambiguous terms which we are compelled to use. We may appear to indulge in paradoxes while expressing truisms. A pupil who can repeat long passages from the Vedas, the Koran, or the Bible, and who can name the date of every remarkable event that has occurred within the historic period, and every town and river on the earth, and their distances one from the other, is said to *know*; and the man who can construct or drive a locomotive, build or navigate a ship, irrigate a hill district with water drawn from the valley, extract gas from the coal, and distribute it appropriately to supply light to a distant city, and contrive the means of transmitting intelligence with the rapidity of thought over hundreds of miles of desert, and under hundreds of miles of sea, is also said to *know*. But the knowledge of one is not to be confounded with that of the other. We are not prepared to point out precisely wherein they differ. We Hindoos do not seem to be so inferior to you Europeans in the first kind of knowledge as we are in the second.

*P.* If we feel that we are of one mind as to the importance of language and the ability to record and compute, whether we call them instruments or means of knowledge, or parts of knowledge itself, it would be a pity to be prevented from acknowledging this concordance of feeling by any want of skill in expressing ourselves. We may accept language and arithmetic as parts of knowledge without being prevented continuing our inquiry, and asking what the prospects of mankind would be if the instruction inherited by each generation from its predecessor were confined to language and arithmetic?

*H.* They would be most deplorable. Happily the thought



of so restricting instruction never occurred to anybody. If instruction in schools has not been carried much beyond reading, writing, and arithmetic, it has been thus limited by the difficulty of carrying it farther, and with the belief that other instruction would be provided outside the schools.

*P.* Wishing, as we do, that each generation should become possessed of the attainments and qualifications of the preceding, with a sense of the improvements upon them, of which they are susceptible, and an earnest desire to seek and obtain such improvements, what must be our opinion of a system of school-instruction confined to little more than reading, writing, and arithmetic?

*H.* That it is incomplete and inadequate. There can be but one justification of it—that its extension is impossible.

*P.* Unless more be impossible, may not instruction thus confined defeat its own purpose, and inflict damage upon the pupils whom it is meant to benefit? Omitting or neglecting instruction beyond language and arithmetic, is there not danger lest words, written and spoken, should often be severed from the ideas or subjects which they are supposed to represent, and numerals be used as mere material for exercising powers of memory?

*H.* Although the thoughts suggested by your questions are quite new to us, we recognize how much more effective instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic would be, if it followed or accompanied, rather than preceded, the knowledge of things to be named, recorded, measured, and counted.

*P.* What do your Brahmins and other learned men reckon among their attainments, besides their knowledge of these elementary subjects, and what do they profess to teach?

*H.* Most of them combine the knowledge of one or more languages with their native language; and beyond this the study of history, geography, and astronomy, and of the sacred books, engages nearly the whole of their time and attention.

*P.* As you have bestowed some thought upon these subjects, and can compare the knowledge which you possess, and are

in search of with what was passed off upon you as knowledge in your youth, will you tell me how far the history, geography, and astronomy which they teach, are distinguishable from fable, and their religion from superstition?

*H.* It would be vain to deny that fable and superstition are inextricably interwoven in their minds with history and religion.

*P.* Should I be justified in inferring from your confession that your learned men, instead of combining ignorance with reading, writing, and arithmetic, combine what is worse, prejudice and superstition?

*H.* Not exactly, for their prejudices and superstitions are not unmixed with glimpses of knowledge and religion.

*P.* Only so confounded together as to be undistinguishable by themselves. Might they not, as educators, be compared to druggists, who, although in possession of curative medicines, cannot distinguish them from the deadly poisons with which they are intermixed?

*H.* And may thus either kill or cure the customers who apply to them. Nevertheless you would be sorry to part with either educators or druggists.

*P.* Because, without them, we might be deprived of the better druggists and educators of the future. Besides, there always have been a few in every age who have been able to make useful selections from the druggist's shop, and to separate more and more of the metal from its ore. Pure religion and unalloyed knowledge are the rewards in promise for man, when, step by step, he shall have succeeded in extricating them from the superstitions and prejudices in combination with which he first gets hold of them. But, tell me, which of our faculties are called into exercise while learning language, ancient and modern, and arithmetic, and I will add geography, astronomy, history, and sacred writings, with the understanding that what is supposed to be learned of all these, is unaccompanied with efforts to distinguish the true from the false, the real from the fabulous?

*H.* We do not perceive that any faculty, except memory, can be said to be called into play, unless the process of learning lead to a comprehension of the proofs which warrant the conclusions said to be learned. It would be difficult to exclude these proofs entirely from instruction in astronomy. Our recollection of the methods pursued in the schools where we learned history, geography, and religion, does not enable us to speak of the exercise of any other faculty than that of memory in learning them.

*P.* How far can the exercise of our memories alone help us to a knowledge of the past, and, in conjunction with our imitative powers, enable us to apply it in the present ?

*H.* The utmost that it can do for us is to enable us to preserve the knowledge and the skill in using it so far acquired, and thus to sustain the state of well-being inherited from our forefathers. It may be doubtful whether it could even accomplish so much. To whatever extent knowledge and skill may be handed down by memory and imitation from one generation to another, other faculties must be called into exercise in order to acquire them in the first instance. And as observation, experiment, study, and reflection are indispensable for the original acquisition of knowledge, there would be great danger of its gradual decline, if the same faculties were not at hand to preserve it. Faulty as our system of school-instruction may be, it would appear, judging by the progress which men have made, to be impossible to prevent entirely some exercise of the other faculties while exercising the memory ; or else the outside world must be continually doing something to rectify school omissions.

*P.* I gather from your answer that, in addition to memory and imitation, observation and reflection are indispensable for the acquisition of knowledge, and, if not indispensable, exceedingly desirable for its preservation and for the maintenance of the state of well-being dependent upon it. If these conclusions be, as I think they are, faithfully drawn from what we have learned of our own nature, and of the condi-

tions of our existence on the earth where we find ourselves, what rule of conduct, as bearing upon education, must be the consequence of them ?

*H.* That each generation should be impressed with a sense of duty towards the succeeding generation in this wise : To call forth and cultivate habits of observation and reflection, and so to direct them as to lead, through the aid of the proofs at command, to the re-discovery by each generation of the knowledge possessed by its predecessor, and to tend to the discovery of the further knowledge which it may be hoped is yet in reserve for mankind ?

*P.* How will you meet the objection sure to be made to such a scheme of school instruction, that it is far beyond anything that could possibly be carried out successfully ?

*H.* The objection may be unanswerable as applied to the present time, although not so in regard to the future, if instructors will do for the young what carriers have done for travellers,—make their methods correspond with the wiser notions and increased powers of the age. A few years ago carriers had not placed steam-power at the service of travellers, because they could not ; and a few years ago it might be said for educators that they had not placed at the service of the young the means of learning the causes and consequences of phenomena, physical, intellectual, moral, and religious, because they could not. But they might do so now if they had the qualifications accessible to them, or if they would be at the pains to acquire them.

*P.* The only obstacle, then, to the present instruction of youth in harmony with the advanced knowledge of the age is want of qualification in instructors ; and the only obstacle to their future instruction is the unwillingness or indifference of instructors to acquire the new powers and better methods of applying them within their reach ; so that in their more important sphere of duty they should at least be on a level with carriers.

*H.* It is inexplicable to us how your countrymen can tolerate

in educators what they would not put up with in carriers—sluggishness in applying every available power in order to do their work as well as possible. Do they value rapidity of transport for themselves more than ability and good dispositions for their children?

*P.* We have had occasion to acknowledge and deplore the prevalence, not only of ignorance, with its sad consequences, all over the world, but of prejudice and superstition, and their sadder consequences. Ought we not to ask what the action of memory will be in shortening or prolonging their malignant influence over the thoughts and conduct of mankind?

*H.* It cannot shorten their influence. Prejudices and superstitions require to be dispelled or uprooted. Memory is a preservative, not a destroyer. Observation and reflection can alone displace error; and after substituting truth and knowledge in its place, memory may be invited to keep them there.

*P.* Looking back upon the teachings of your Brahmins and Pundits, does it appear to you that, while they impart to others the mixture of truth and error which by them is held as knowledge, they do anything that is likely to lead their pupils to suspect that error, unperceived by them, may be mixed up with the truths presented to them, or to enable them to distinguish the one from the other?

*H.* They appear to us to have as little thought of doing anything of the kind as your missionaries. They both alike have accepted doctrines which they assume to be true, but the truth of which it is sinful to doubt, and as such, and, in that spirit, they do their utmost to impose them upon others, by inviting an exercise, not of observation, inquiry, and reflection, but of memory.

*P.* I do not wish to draw invidious comparisons between the Brahmins and the missionaries. I will therefore ask a question which concerns them conjointly. What would be the effect of their teachings, if some men did not break loose from the chains by which they were meant to be bound down to



the past, if some did not refuse, while mastering a knowledge of the past, to be mere copies of their instructors, and to be shut out from attempts to improve upon them?

*H.* A stop would be put to the progress in well-being of which we have still so much need. Damage would be inflicted upon posterity similar to that which would have been inflicted upon us, had each of our forefathers been content to copy his predecessor. At this very time we should all resemble those savages which are yet to be found in some parts of the earth—types of the lowest form of humanity.

*P.* Agreeing, as we do, that men ought to be inspired with a desire to improve upon past knowledge while striving to acquire it, must you not attribute much of the superiority observable in some countries over others to the greater prevalence of this desire of improvement among their inhabitants?

*H.* We must, and we do. You Europeans are vastly our superiors in most respects. While you are enjoying the fruits of attainments in knowledge vastly beyond those of Asiatics, you are evidently intent upon making additions to them. In one respect, however, we are quite on a level with you. Considering your superiority in other respects, we might say you are even inferior to us in this—we mean, of course, in your method of dealing with religion.

*P.* I was aware that, while our missionaries had helped you to discard your own superstitions, they had failed to persuade you to accept their religion; but I did not suppose you took so unfavourable a view of their religion as to rate it below the one which you had abandoned as untenable.

*H.* We had no thought of returning to a comparison between the Hindoo and the Christian religions; between the ultimate eternal happiness of all, though deferred for many, and the eternal happiness of a few only and the eternal misery of all but a few; between the transmigration of souls leading certainly to salvation, and atonement and redemption impotent to achieve it: not to say much more, which we might, in favour of the superstitions which we have abandoned, as con-

trasted with the superstitions which we decline to accept. Our thoughts were rather fixed upon the arrogance and conceit with which your missionaries, and, we presume, your priests in general, claim to have attained the summit of perfection in religious knowledge, and try to fix discredit, or even ignominy, upon those who question their infallibility.

*P.* When I tell you that in Europe there are numerous Christian churches and sects, each differing from the others, and that each church and sect again is distracted by differences of doctrine within itself, will not that induce you to retract or modify your charge of religious arrogance and conceit?

*H.* It might confirm us in the justice of it. For if the arrogance and conceit were less deeply rooted in them, they could scarcely be blind to the glaring inconsistency of the pretensions of each to infallibility amid the differences and contentions of professing Christians, and the utter repudiation of their superstitions by all who have not been crammed with them from their childhood upwards.

*P.* You are probably not aware that, among Christians, those sects which have taken to themselves the denomination of "Protestants," because they protest against the pretensions to infallibility of their Christian brethren, claim for every man the right of private judgment, and insist upon his being left at liberty to interpret, to accept, and to reject doctrines according to the dictates of his own conscientious convictions. I have often heard some of them, when contending very vehemently against those who would cramp, or confine, or strangle, or smother the desires and efforts of others to inquire and learn and decide for themselves, not only claim the right, but enjoin the exercise of that right as a duty both to God and man. You would, at all events, exculpate teachers like these from arrogance and conceit?

*H.* Certainly, if the doctrines observed in conduct corresponded with those occasionally pronounced with their lips. We will not deny that we have heard like sentiments uttered, but we never met with any Christians who did not contradict

these recommendations to inquire and judge by opposite doctrines enforced with equal solemnity at other times; and their conduct and practice showed plainly enough which doctrines are really favoured by them. All honest men believe in the truth of the doctrines which they profess. But, unless arrogant and conceited, they would be content to show their faith by calling upon others to learn, that is, to inquire and reflect, satisfied that their own doctrines, if true, would be accepted as confidently in religion as in other matters of less gravity.

*P.* And are there not people among us, think you, who are prepared to test the integrity of their faith by submitting their doctrines for the acceptance of those who have been inspired with an ardent attachment to truth, and are endowed with attainments qualifying them to distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong?

*H.* We are not going to deny that there are such people. Indeed, we should be sorry not to think that there are many; but we apprehend they cannot be Christians.

*P.* I dare say you have reasons for what you are stating, and reasons which to you seem satisfactory; and I confess to some curiosity to learn what they are.

*H.* They are drawn, of course, from our own observation of the teachings and doings of Christians. To begin with the baptizing or Christ-ening of their children; so far from trusting that they will be sure to become Christians if nurtured in a love of truth and cultivated to a capacity for seeking and finding it, they procure people of mature years, whom they call godfathers and godmothers, to undertake not only that the new-born babes shall be Christians, but Christians of a particular pattern. Later, but before their babes have attained years of discretion, when their memories have been sufficiently drilled to enable them to repeat accurately in words answers to questions in words, to which neither teachers nor learners ever think of attaching a meaning, they are brought to take upon themselves the promises made for them by their godfathers and godmothers, not to depart from the creed of their

fathers, the merits of which, whatever they may be, it is utterly beyond the attainments possible at their age to appreciate. If we could divest ourselves of the thoughts of the mischief which is brewing, we should be inclined to laugh at so ludicrous a spectacle as a congregation of demure personages with a priest at their head, all glorying in a belief which they would never have inherited if their progenitors of old had not seceded from the faith of their fathers, and all conscious of forming parts of a community harassed with contentions about the interpretation of the words in which they and their godfathers had been pledged, and nevertheless pertinaciously adhering to similar mummary over child after child.

*P.* Have you not heard that there are many Christians who object to infant baptism, and many more who view it as a mere ceremonial, which, at all events, does no harm to the child, and serves as a means of attracting to it the good-will of those who may be able to protect and advance it?

*H.* We have heard of both; and would willingly exculpate the first from arrogance and conceit, if they educated their children to seek, and find, and cherish truth before inviting them to adult baptism; and the second, from indifference to truth, if they declined to sanction ceremonially what they either despise or reject in their consciences.

*P.* Do you imagine that Europeans could have made the progress which you do not dispute, unless many of them had broken loose from what you represent to be the priestly trammels imposed upon them in childhood, and intended to impede their search for truth in manhood?

*H.* We have more than once confessed that your countrymen puzzle us. They act as if the doctrines which they pronounce were so many words put together for exercises in enunciation, much in the same way as nonsense-verses are put together for practice in versification. With them, the Christian religion seems to be a form of words by no means influencing their ways in commerce, in judicature, or in war; and the extinction of the words, if it were to take place



to-morrow, would not necessarily, as far as we can see, affect their ways in any respect.

*P.* According to you, the impression made upon them by their religious teaching and training has not been deep.

*H.* We should hardly have expected that inference from you. When we said that the ways of your countrymen in commerce, in judicature, and in war showed their utter disregard for the words in which they give expression to what they call Christianity, we did not say that their ways might not be vastly better than they are. We certainly think that they would not conduct themselves the worse for being accustomed from their childhood to look for truth, and a knowledge of right and wrong, to express in words only what they really felt and knew, and to act in conformity with what they expressed and felt to be right. But the position in which Christians place their priests and principal teachers is the strangest of all proceedings, in those who profess a love for truth and religion.

*P.* What is it that you are thinking of as so particularly strange?

*H.* Considering that they almost exclusively rely upon their priests to supply teachers for the young men, and to expound morality and exhort to its practice, they seem to us to do the very worst things possible; first, to prepare, and afterwards to improve their priests, so as to secure the creditable performance of both these duties.

*P.* I readily admit that there is great room for amendment in the course pursued by my countrymen in forming and placing their priests, but are you not exaggerating when you affirm that they do the worst things possible?

*H.* We think not. Although we look upon Christianity more as a superstition than a religion, and Christian doctrines as a tissue of contradictions, many of them unintelligible, and when intelligible, absurd and impracticable, we assume that Christians hold them as truths, and would have them taught as truths. Now in the training of their priests, no reliance



is placed on inspiring a love for truth, cultivating the ability to seek and find it, and making sure that the acceptance of the doctrines of Christianity will be a necessary consequence. Far otherwise. They are first predestined by baptism, and then crammed with creeds, and pledged to persist in repeating them. Precautions having been thus taken against any activity of intellect or courageousness of inquiry which might lead to dissent from the doctrines, or more properly the words stored up in their memories, the aspirants for priest's orders sign articles and take ordination vows, so that if, at any future time, truth and Christianity should appear to be at variance, the former may be suppressed in commiseration for the weakness of the latter. Other precautions are taken besides, lest new truths or a clearer perception of old ones should triumph over accepted errors. Emoluments and positions of dignity are held up to be competed for by all who sustain a character for orthodoxy, through shutting out the light, or pretending not to see what it makes apparent. Privation, obloquy, and even ruin, are held *in terrorem* over those who are not stupid enough to be inaccessible to new truths, or not prudent enough to pretend to have been impenetrable by them.

P. We have devoted more attention than was called for from us to the examination of priestly influences. But it has proved to us that we are of one mind in this respect—that nothing ought to be received as religion which is opposed to the advancement of human well-being, and that well-being has sustained damage from the priests themselves in addition to what it has sustained from superstition disguised as religion. If we can but ascertain how such well-being as we are in the enjoyment of may be continued to us, and how the future well-being needful may be obtained, we may fearlessly act on our convictions, undeterred by priestly threats uttered in the name of religion, or by priestly traditions insisted upon in the same name. It only remains for me now to make sure, after this digression, that we understand one another as to

what course ought to be taken by intelligent people intent upon the advancement of well-being, and upon its extension as nearly as possible to the whole human family.

*H.* They must strive to keep up to the standard of attainments, so far reached, to make all the young as nearly as possible participate in them, and to cultivate the desire to search for and acquire the further attainments which experience leads us to suspect are yet in reserve for those who will seek them assiduously.

*P.* As far as you have been able to learn, is there any difference at birth between the children born in countries the most, and in countries the least, advanced in well-being?

*H.* There may be, and most probably there are, differences of temperament and of latent capacity susceptible of development.

*P.* You answer cautiously. May I infer that you are not aware of there being any difference in their several attainments?

*H.* Where all are necessarily ignorant and incapable, it is impossible that there should be differences in acquirements, however various may be the latent capacities waiting to be developed.

*P.* Is there any possibility of our being mistaken if we affirm that all the children, born in countries the most advanced in well-being, are ignorant and incapable?

*H.* No.

*P.* Would their ignorance and incapacity be removed, or their latent powers be developed, if they were surrounded by adults, themselves ignorant and incapable?

*H.* No. The attainments of their parents were arrived at through the efforts of generation after generation, each building upon the attainments of its predecessor, and handing down its own acquirements to its successor.

*P.* Are all children, whatever the latent capacities with which they are gifted, dependent upon the circumstances into which they are born, for the attainments of which they will be possessed?

*H.* Yes, understanding by circumstances, all appliances adapted to impart a knowledge of the past, ability to apply it, desire to add to it, and disposition to direct it aright.

*P.* May I conclude, then, by stating it to be the conviction of us all that intelligent men, desirous of advancing human well-being, must be specially careful that education be provided for every child that is born? Let the soil, the climate, the race, the religion, and the superstitions be what they may, if prevailing well-being is to be maintained, the attainments of each generation must be handed down to the next. If prevailing misery is to be circumscribed and diminished, the attainments of each generation must be increased, and more diffused in the next. May I count upon your assent to these propositions?

*H.* You may; and we have to thank you for having inspired us with the conviction that the purpose of education will most certainly be accomplished by encouraging, or rather by carefully avoiding to discourage, in the young the desire to observe, to investigate, to experiment, to infer, to practise, and to learn for themselves; the teacher's efforts and skill being to direct and help the efforts of learners. The young will thus be, while they grow in years and strength, active acquirers, not merely passive recipients of past knowledge, and predisposed and prepared to acquire knowledge yet to be brought within man's reach, and perhaps to be contributors themselves to the increase of human knowledge and attainments. Attainments striven for in this spirit, never losing sight of the purpose for which they ought to be sought and applied, cannot but be conducive to truthfulness of character, and to a sensitiveness to the distinctions between right and wrong, whether sanctioned or not by what passes around them for religion.







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